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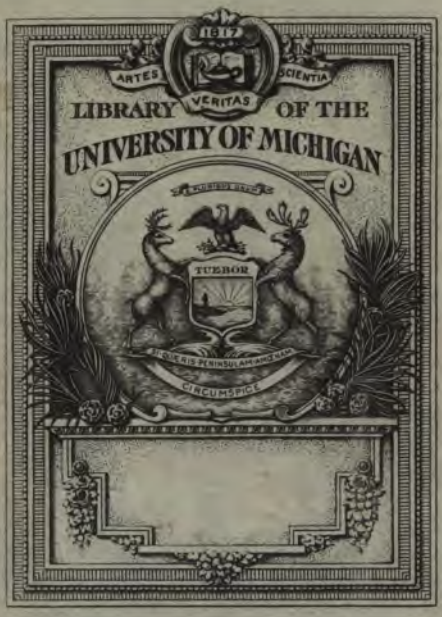

THE GIFT OF

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HISTORY

OF THE

CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

HISTORY

OF THE

CONQUEST OF MEXICO,

WITH A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE

ANCIENT MEXICAN CIVILIZATION,

AND THE LIFE OF THE CONQUEROR,

HERNANDO CORTÉS.

By WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT,

AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA," "HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF PERU," ETC.

"Victrices aquilas alium laturus in orbem."
LUCAN, Pharsalia, lib. v., v. 238.

NEW AND REVISED EDITION,

WITH THE AUTHOR'S LATEST CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

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BOOK THIRD.

MARCH TO MEXICO.

(CONTINUED.)

CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

BOOK III.

MARCH TO MEXICO.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER VI.

CITY OF CHOLULA.—GREAT TEMPLE.—MARCH TO CHOLULA.—RECEPTION OF THE SPANIARDS.—CONSPIRACY DETECTED.

1519.

THE ancient city of Cholula, capital of the republic of that name, lay nearly six leagues south of Tlascala, and about twenty east, or rather southeast, of Mexico. It was said by Cortés to contain twenty thousand houses within the walls, and as many more in the environs;[1] though now dwindled to a population of less than sixteen thousand souls.[2] Whatever was its real number

[1] Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.—According to Las Casas, the place contained 30,000 *vecinos*, or about 150,000 inhabitants. (Brevissima Relatione della Distruttione dell' Indie Occidentale (Venetia, 1643).) This latter, being the smaller estimate, is *a priori* the more credible; especially—a rare occurrence—when in the pages of the good Bishop of Chiapa.

[2] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iii. p. 159.

of inhabitants, it was unquestionably, at the time of the Conquest, one of the most populous and flourishing cities in New Spain.

It was of great antiquity, and was founded by the primitive races who overspread the land before the Aztecs.[3] We have few particulars of its form of government, which seems to have been cast on a republican model similar to that of Tlascala. This answered so well that the state maintained its independence down to a very late period, when, if not reduced to vassalage by the Aztecs, it was so far under their control as to enjoy few of the benefits of a separate political existence. Their connection with Mexico brought the Cholulans into frequent collision with their neighbors and kindred the Tlascalans. But, although far superior to them in refinement and the various arts of civilization, they were no match in war for the bold mountaineers, the Swiss of Anahuac. The Cholulan capital was the great commercial emporium of the plateau. The inhabitants excelled in various mechanical arts, especially that of working in metals, the manufacture of cotton and agave cloths, and of a delicate kind of pottery, rivalling, it was said, that of Florence in beauty.[4] But such attention to the arts of a polished and peaceful community naturally indisposed them to war, and disqualified them for coping with those who made war the great business of life. The

[3] Veytia carries back the foundation of the city to the Ulmecs, a people who preceded the Toltecs. (Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 13, 20.) As the latter, after occupying the land several centuries, have left not a single written record, probably, of their existence, it will be hard to disprove the licentiate's assertion,—still harder to prove it.

[4] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 2.

Cholulans were accused of effeminacy, and were less distinguished—it is the charge of their rivals—by their courage than their cunning.[5]

But the capital, so conspicuous for its refinement and its great antiquity, was even more venerable for the religious traditions which invested it. It was here that the god Quetzalcoatl paused in his passage to the coast, and passed twenty years in teaching the Toltec inhabitants the arts of civilization. He made them acquainted with better forms of government, and a more spiritualized religion, in which the only sacrifices were the fruits and flowers of the season.[6] It is not easy to determine what he taught, since his lessons have been so mingled with the licentious dogmas of his own priests and the mystic commentaries of the Christian missionary.[7] It is probable that he was one of those rare and gifted beings who, dissipating the darkness of the age by the illumination of their own genius, are deified by a grateful posterity and placed among the lights of heaven.

It was in honor of this benevolent deity that the stupendous mound was erected on which the traveller

[5] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 19.

[6] Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 15, et seq.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 5; lib. 3.

[7] Later divines have found in these teachings of the Toltec god, or high-priest, the germs of some of the great mysteries of the Christian faith, as those of the Incarnation, and the Trinity, for example. In the teacher himself they recognize no less a person than St. Thomas the Apostle! See the Dissertation of the irrefragable Dr. Mier, with an edifying commentary by Señor Bustamante, ap. Sahagun. (Hist. de Nueva-España, tom. i., Suplemento.). The reader will find further particulars of this matter in Appendix, Part 1, of this History.

still gazes with admiration as the most colossal fabric in New Spain, rivalling in dimensions, and somewhat resembling in form, the pyramidal structures of ancient Egypt. The date of its erection is unknown; for it was found there when the Aztecs entered on the plateau. It had the form common to the Mexican *teocallis*, that of a truncated pyramid, facing with its four sides the cardinal points, and divided into the same number of terraces. Its original outlines, however, have been effaced by the action of time and of the elements, while the exuberant growth of shrubs and wild flowers, which have mantled over its surface, give it the appearance of one of those symmetrical elevations thrown up by the caprice of nature rather than by the industry of man. It is doubtful, indeed, whether the interior be not a natural hill; though it seems not improbable that it is an artificial composition of stone and earth, deeply incrusted, as is certain, in every part, with alternate strata of brick and clay.[8]

The perpendicular height of the pyramid is one hundred and seventy-seven feet. Its base is one thousand four hundred and twenty-three feet long, twice as long as that of the great pyramid of Cheops. It may give some idea of its dimensions to state that its

[8] Such, on the whole, seems to be the judgment of M. de Humboldt, who has examined this interesting monument with his usual care. (Vues des Cordillères, p. 27, et seq.—Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 150, et seq.) The opinion derives strong confirmation from the fact that a road, cut some years since across the tumulus, laid open a large section of it, in which the alternate layers of brick and clay are distinctly visible. (Ibid., loc. cit.) The present appearance of this monument, covered over with the verdure and vegetable mould of centuries, excuses the scepticism of the more superficial traveller.

base, which is square, covers about forty-four acres, and the platform on its truncated summit embraces more than one. It reminds us of those colossal monuments of brickwork which are still seen in ruins on the banks of the Euphrates, and, in much higher preservation, on those of the Nile.[9]

On the summit stood a sumptuous temple, in which was the image of the mystic deity, "god of the air," with ebon features, unlike the fair complexion which he bore upon earth, wearing a mitre on his head waving with *plumes of fire*, with a resplendent collar of gold round his neck, pendants of mosaic turquoise in his ears, a jewelled sceptre in one hand, and a shield curiously painted, the emblem of his rule over the winds, in the other.[10] The sanctity of the place, hallowed by hoary tradition, and the magnificence of the temple and its services, made it an object of veneration throughout the land, and pilgrims from the farthest corners of Anahuac came to offer up their devotions at the shrine of Quetzalcoatl.[11] The number of these was so great as to give an air of mendicity to the

[9] Several of the pyramids of Egypt, and the ruins of Babylon, are, as is well known, of brick. An inscription on one of the former, indeed, celebrates this material as superior to stone. (Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 136.)—Humboldt furnishes an apt illustration of the size of the Mexican *teocalli*, by comparing it to a mass of bricks covering a square four times as large as the Place Vendôme, and of twice the height of the Louvre. Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 152.

[10] A minute account of the costume and insignia of Quetzalcoatl is given by Father Sahagun, who saw the Aztec gods before the arm of the Christian convert had tumbled them from "their pride of place." See Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 3.

[11] They came from the distance of two hundred leagues, says Torquemada. Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 19.

motley population of the city; and Cortés, struck with the novelty, tells us that he saw multitudes of beggars, such as are to be found in the enlightened capitals of Europe;[12]—a whimsical criterion of civilization, which must place our own prosperous land somewhat low in the scale.

Cholula was not the resort only of the indigent devotee. Many of the kindred races had temples of their own in the city, in the same manner as some Christian nations have in Rome, and each temple was provided with its own peculiar ministers for the service of the deity to whom it was consecrated. In no city was there seen such a concourse of priests, so many processions, such pomp of ceremonial, sacrifice, and religious festivals. Cholula was, in short, what Mecca is among Mahometans, or Jerusalem among Christians; it was the Holy City of Anahuac.[13]

The religious rites were not performed, however, in the pure spirit originally prescribed by its tutelary deity. His altars, as well as those of the numerous Aztec gods, were stained with human blood; and six thousand victims *are said* to have been annually offered up at their sanguinary shrines![14] The great number of these may be estimated from the declaration of Cortés that he counted four hundred towers in the

[12] "Hay mucha gente pobre, y que piden entre los Ricos por las Calles, y por las Casas, y Mercados, como hacen los Pobres en España, y en otras partes que hay *Gente de razon.*" Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 67, 68.

[13] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 19.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 61.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[14] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 2.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.

city;[15] yet no temple had more than two, many only one. High above the rest rose the great "pyramid of Cholula," with its undying fires flinging their radiance far and wide over the capital, and proclaiming to the nations that there was the mystic worship—alas! how corrupted by cruelty and superstition!—of the good deity who was one day to return and resume his empire over the land.

Nothing could be more grand than the view which met the eye from the area on the truncated summit of the pyramid. Towards the west stretched that bold barrier of porphyritic rock which nature has reared around the Valley of Mexico, with the huge Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl standing like two colossal sentinels to guard the entrance to the enchanted region. Far away to the east was seen the conical head of Orizaba soaring high into the clouds, and nearer, the barren though beautifully-shaped Sierra de la Malinche, throwing its broad shadows over the plains of Tlascala. Three of these are volcanoes higher than the highest mountain-peak in Europe, and shrouded in snows which never melt under the fierce sun of the tropics. At the foot of the spectator lay the sacred city of Cholula, with its bright towers and pinnacles sparkling in the sun, reposing amidst gardens and verdant groves, which then thickly studded the cultivated environs of the capital. Such was the magnificent prospect which met the gaze of the Conquerors, and may still, with slight change, meet that of the modern

[15] "É certifico á Vuestra Alteza, que yo conté desde una Mezquita quatrocientas, y tantas Torres en la dicha Ciudad, y todas son de Mezquitas." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.

traveller, as from the platform of the great pyramid his eye wanders over the fairest portion of the beautiful plateau of Puebla.[16]

But it is time to return to Tlascala. On the appointed morning the Spanish army took up its march to Mexico by the way of Cholula. It was followed by crowds of the citizens, filled with admiration at the intrepidity of men who, so few in number, would venture to brave the great Montezuma in his capital. Yet an immense body of warriors offered to share the dangers of the expedition; but Cortés, while he showed his gratitude for their good will, selected only six thousand of the volunteers to bear him company.[17] He

[16] The city of Puebla de los Ángeles was founded by the Spaniards soon after the Conquest, on the site of an insignificant village in the territory of Cholula, a few miles to the east of that capital. It is, perhaps, the most considerable city in New Spain, after Mexico itself, which it rivals in beauty. It seems to have inherited the religious pre-eminence of the ancient Cholula, being distinguished, like her, for the number and splendor of its churches, the multitude of its clergy, and the magnificence of its ceremonies and festivals. These are fully displayed in the pages of travellers who have passed through the place on the usual route from Vera Cruz to the capital. (See, in particular, Bullock's Mexico, vol. i. chap. 6.) The environs of Cholula, still irrigated as in the days of the Aztecs, are equally remarkable for the fruitfulness of the soil. The best wheat-lands, according to a very respectable authority, yield in the proportion of eighty for one. Ward's Mexico, vol. ii. p. 270.—See, also, Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 158; tom. iv. p. 330.

[17] According to Cortés, a hundred thousand men offered their services on this occasion! "And although I forbade it, and requested that they would not go, since there was no necessity for it, yet I was followed by as many as a hundred thousand men well fitted for war, who came with me to the distance of nearly two leagues from the city, and then through my pressing importunities were induced to return, with the exception of five or six thousand, who continued in my com-

was unwilling to encumber himself with an unwieldy force that might impede his movements, and probably did not care to put himself so far in the power of allies whose attachment was too recent to afford sufficient guarantee for their fidelity.

After crossing some rough and hilly ground, the army entered on the wide plain which spreads out for miles around Cholula. At the elevation of more than six thousand feet above the sea, they beheld the rich products of various climes growing side by side, fields of towering maize, the juicy aloe, the *chilli* or Aztec pepper, and large plantations of the cactus, on which the brilliant cochineal is nourished. Not a rood of land but was under cultivation;[18] and the soil—an uncommon thing on the table-land—was irrigated by numerous streams and canals, and well shaded by woods, that have disappeared before the rude axe of the Spaniards. Towards evening they reached a small stream, on the banks of which Cortés determined to take up his quarters for the night, being unwilling to disturb the tranquillity of the city by introducing so large a force into it at an unseasonable hour.

Here he was soon joined by a number of Cholulan caciques and their attendants, who came to view and welcome the strangers. When they saw their Tlascalan enemies in the camp, however, they exhibited signs of displeasure, and intimated an apprehension that their

pany." (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 64.) This, which must have been nearly the whole fighting force of the republic, does not startle Oviedo (Hist. de las Ind., MS., cap. 4) nor Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58.

[18] The words of the *Conquistador* are yet stronger. "There is not a *hand's-breadth* of land that is not cultivated." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.

presence in the town might occasion disorder. The remonstrance seemed reasonable to Cortés, and he accordingly commanded his allies to remain in their present quarters, and to join him as he left the city on the way to Mexico.

On the following morning he made his entrance at the head of his army into Cholula, attended by no other Indians than those from Cempoalla, and a handful of Tlascalans, to take charge of the baggage. His allies, at parting, gave him many cautions respecting the people he was to visit, who, while they affected to despise them as a nation of traders, employed the dangerous arms of perfidy and cunning. As the troops drew near the city, the road was lined with swarms of people of both sexes and every age, old men tottering with infirmity, women with children in their arms, all eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, whose persons, weapons, and horses were objects of intense curiosity to eyes which had not hitherto ever encountered them in battle. The Spaniards, in turn, were filled with admiration at the aspect of the Cholulans, much superior in dress and general appearance to the nations they had hitherto seen. They were particularly struck with the costume of the higher classes, who wore fine embroidered mantles, resembling the graceful *albornoz*, or Moorish cloak, in their texture and fashion.[19] They showed the same delicate taste for flowers as the other tribes of the plateau, decorating

[19] "All the inhabitants of rank wear, besides their other clothing, *albornoces*, differing from those of Africa inasmuch as they have pockets, but very similar in form, in material, and in the bordering." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.

their persons with them, and tossing garlands and bunches among the soldiers. An immense number of priests mingled with the crowd, swinging their aromatic censers, while music from various kinds of instruments gave a lively welcome to the visitors, and made the whole scene one of gay, bewildering enchantment. If it did not have the air of a triumphal procession so much as at Tlascala, where the melody of instruments was drowned by the shouts of the multitude, it gave a quiet assurance of hospitality and friendly feeling not less grateful.

The Spaniards were also struck with the cleanliness of the city, the width and great regularity of the streets, which seemed to have been laid out on a settled plan, with the solidity of the houses, and the number and size of the pyramidal temples. In the court of one of these, and its surrounding buildings, they were quartered.[20]

[20] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 67.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 82.—The Spaniards compared Cholula to the beautiful Valladolid, according to Herrera, whose description of the entry is very animated: "Saliéronle otro dia á recibir mas de diez mil ciudadanos en diversas tropas, con rosas, flores, pan, aves, i frutas, i mucha música. Llegaba vn esquadron á dar la bien llegada á Hernando Cortés, i con buena órden se iba apartando, dando lugar á que otro llegase. . . . En llegando á la ciudad, que pareció mucho á los Castellanos, en el asiento, i perspectiva, á Valladolid, salió la demas gente, quedando mui espantada de ver las figuras, talles, i armas de los Castellanos. Saliéron los sacerdotes con vestiduras blancas, como sobrepellices, i algunas cerradas por delante, los braços defuera, con fluecos de algodon en las orillas. Unos llevaban figuras de ídolos en las manos, otros sahumerios; otros tocaban cornetas, atabalejos, i diversas

They were soon visited by the principal lords of the place, who seemed solicitous to provide them with accommodations. Their table was plentifully supplied, and, in short, they experienced such attentions as were calculated to dissipate their suspicions, and made them impute those of their Tlascalan friends to prejudice and old national hostility.

In a few days the scene changed. Messengers arrived from Montezuma, who, after a short and unpleasant intimation to Cortés that his approach occasioned much disquietude to their master, conferred separately with the Mexican ambassadors still in the Castilian camp, and then departed, taking one of the latter along with them. From this time the deportment of their Cholulan hosts underwent a visible alteration. They did not visit the quarters as before, and, when invited to do so, excused themselves on pretence of illness. The supply of provisions was stinted, on the ground that they were short of maize. These symptoms of alienation, independently of temporary embarrassment, caused serious alarm in the breast of Cortés, for the future. His apprehensions were not allayed by the reports of the Cempoallans, who told him that in wandering round the city they had seen several streets barricadoed, the *azoteas*, or flat roofs of the houses, loaded with huge stones and other missiles, as if preparatory to an assault, and in some places they had found holes covered over with branches, and upright stakes planted within, as if to embarrass the move-

músicas, i todos iban cantando, i llegaban á encensar á los Castellanos. Con esta pompa entráron en Chulula." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 1.

ments of the cavalry.[21] Some Tlascalans coming in, also, from their camp, informed the general that a great sacrifice, mostly of children, had been offered up in a distant quarter of the town, to propitiate the favor of the gods, apparently for some intended enterprise. They added that they had seen numbers of the citizens leaving the city with their women and children, as if to remove them to a place of safety. These tidings confirmed the worst suspicions of Cortés, who had no doubt that some hostile scheme was in agitation. If he had felt any, a discovery by Marina, the good angel of the expedition, would have turned these doubts into certainty.

The amiable manners of the Indian girl had won her the regard of the wife of one of the caciques, who repeatedly urged Marina to visit her house, darkly intimating that in this way she would escape the fate that awaited the Spaniards. The interpreter, seeing the importance of obtaining further intelligence at once, pretended to be pleased with the proposal, and affected, at the same time, great discontent with the white men, by whom she was detained in captivity. Thus throwing the credulous Cholulan off her guard, Marina gradually insinuated herself into her confidence, so far as to draw from her a full account of the conspiracy.

[21] Cortés, indeed, noticed these same alarming appearances on his entering the city, thus suggesting the idea of a premeditated treachery. "On the road we noticed many indications such as the natives of this province had told us of; for we found the royal road barred up and another opened, and some holes dug,—though not many,—and some of the streets of the city barricadoed, and many stones upon the roofs; which put us more upon our guard and caused us to exercise great caution." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 64.

It originated, she said, with the Aztec emperor, who had sent rich bribes to the great caciques, and to her husband among others, to secure them in his views. The Spaniards were to be assaulted as they marched out of the capital, when entangled in its streets, in which numerous impediments had been placed to throw the cavalry into disorder. A force of twenty thousand Mexicans was already quartered at no great distance from the city, to support the Cholulans in the assault. It was confidently expected that the Spaniards, thus embarrassed in their movements, would fall an easy prey to the superior strength of their enemy. A sufficient number of prisoners was to be reserved to grace the sacrifices of Cholula; the rest were to be led in fetters to the capital of Montezuma.

While this conversation was going on, Marina occupied herself with putting up such articles of value and wearing-apparel as she proposed to take with her in the evening, when she could escape unnoticed from the Spanish quarters to the house of her Cholulan friend, who assisted her in the operation. Leaving her visitor thus employed, Marina found an opportunity to steal away for a few moments, and, going to the general's apartment, disclosed to him her discoveries. He immediately caused the cacique's wife to be seized, and, on examination, she fully confirmed the statement of his Indian mistress.

The intelligence thus gathered by Cortés filled him with the deepest alarm. He was fairly taken in the snare. To fight or to fly seemed equally difficult. He was in a city of enemies, where every house might be converted into a fortress, and where such embarrass-

ments were thrown in the way as might render the manœuvres of his artillery and horse nearly impracticable. In addition to the wily Cholulans, he must cope, under all these disadvantages, with the redoubtable warriors of Mexico. He was like a traveller who has lost his way in the darkness among precipices, where any step may dash him to pieces, and where to retreat or to advance is equally perilous.

He was desirous to obtain still further confirmation and particulars of the conspiracy. He accordingly induced two of the priests in the neighborhood, one of them a person of much influence in the place, to visit his quarters. By courteous treatment, and liberal largesses of the rich presents he had received from Montezuma,—thus turning his own gifts against the giver,—he drew from them a full confirmation of the previous report. The emperor had been in a state of pitiable vacillation since the arrival of the Spaniards. His first orders to the Cholulans were to receive the strangers kindly. He had recently consulted his oracles anew, and obtained for answer that Cholula would be the grave of his enemies; for the gods would be sure to support him in avenging the sacrilege offered to the Holy City. So confident were the Aztecs of success, that numerous manacles, or poles with thongs which served as such, were already in the place to secure the prisoners.

Cortés, now feeling himself fully possessed of the facts, dismissed the priests, with injunctions of secrecy, scarcely necessary. He told them it was his purpose to leave the city on the following morning, and requested that they would induce some of the principal

caciques to grant him an interview in his quarters. He then summoned a council of his officers, though, as it seems, already determined as to the course he was to take.

The members of the council were differently affected by the startling intelligence, according to their different characters. The more timid, disheartened by the prospect of obstacles which seemed to multiply as they drew nearer the Mexican capital, were for retracing their steps and seeking shelter in the friendly city of Tlascala. Others, more persevering, but prudent, were for taking the more northerly route, originally recommended by their allies. The greater part supported the general, who was ever of opinion that they had no alternative but to advance. Retreat would be ruin. Half-way measures were scarcely better, and would infer a timidity which must discredit them with both friend and foe. Their true policy was to rely on themselves,—to strike such a blow as should intimidate their enemies and show them that the Spaniards were as incapable of being circumvented by artifice as of being crushed by weight of numbers and courage in the open field.

When the caciques, persuaded by the priests, appeared before Cortés, he contented himself with gently rebuking their want of hospitality, and assured them the Spaniards would be no longer a burden to their city, as he proposed to leave it early on the following morning. He requested, moreover, that they would furnish a reinforcement of two thousand men to transport his artillery and baggage. The chiefs, after some consultation, acquiesced in a demand which might in some measure favor their own designs.

On their departure, the general summoned the Aztec ambassadors before him. He briefly acquainted them with his detection of the treacherous plot to destroy his army, the contrivance of which, he said, was imputed to their master, Montezuma. It grieved him much, he added, to find the emperor implicated in so nefarious a scheme, and that the Spaniards must now march as enemies against the prince whom they had hoped to visit as a friend.

The ambassadors, with earnest protestations, asserted their entire ignorance of the conspiracy, and their belief that Montezuma was equally innocent of a crime which they charged wholly on the Cholulans. It was clearly the policy of Cortés to keep on good terms with the Indian monarch, to profit as long as possible by his good offices, and to avail himself of his fancied security —such feelings of security as the general could inspire him with—to cover his own future operations. He affected to give credit, therefore, to the assertion of the envoys, and declared his unwillingness to believe that a monarch who had rendered the Spaniards so many friendly offices would now consummate the whole by a deed of such unparalleled baseness. The discovery of their twofold duplicity, he added, sharpened his resentment against the Cholulans, on whom he would take such vengeance as should amply requite the injuries done both to Montezuma and the Spaniards. He then dismissed the ambassadors, taking care, notwithstanding this show of confidence, to place a strong guard over them, to prevent communication with the citizens.[28]

[28] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 59.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 65.—Torquemada,

That night was one of deep anxiety to the army. The ground they stood on seemed loosening beneath their feet, and any moment might be the one marked for their destruction. Their vigilant general took all possible precautions for their safety, increasing the number of the sentinels, and posting his guns in such a manner as to protect the approaches to the camp. His eyes, it may well be believed, did not close during the night. Indeed, every Spaniard lay down in his arms, and every horse stood saddled and bridled, ready for instant service. But no assault was meditated by the Indians, and the stillness of the hour was undisturbed except by the occasional sounds heard in a populous city, even when buried in slumber, and by the hoarse cries of the priests from the turrets of the *teocallis*, proclaiming through their trumpets the watches of the night.[23]

Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 39.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 83, cap. 4.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 1.—Argensola, Anales, lib. 1, cap. 85.

[23] "Las horas de la noche las regulaban por las estrellas, y tocaban los ministros del templo que estaban destinados para este fin, ciertos instrumentos como vocinas, con que hacian conocer al pueblo el tiempo." Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 14.

CHAPTER VII.

TERRIBLE MASSACRE. — TRANQUILLITY RESTORED. — REFLECTIONS ON THE MASSACRE.—FURTHER PROCEEDINGS.—ENVOYS FROM MONTEZUMA.

1519.

WITH the first streak of morning light, Cortés was seen on horseback, directing the movements of his little band. The strength of his forces he drew up in the great square or court, surrounded partly by buildings, as before noticed, and in part by a high wall. There were three gates of entrance, at each of which he placed a strong guard. The rest of his troops, with his great guns, he posted without the enclosure, in such a manner as to command the avenues and secure those within from interruption in their bloody work. Orders had been sent the night before to the Tlascalan chiefs to hold themselves ready, at a concerted signal, to march into the city and join the Spaniards.

The arrangements were hardly completed, before the Cholulan caciques appeared, leading a body of levies, *tamanes*, even more numerous than had been demanded. They were marched at once into the square, commanded, as we have seen, by the Spanish infantry, which was drawn up under the walls. Cortés then took some of the caciques aside. With a stern air, he bluntly charged them with the conspiracy, showing

that he was well acquainted with all the particulars. He had visited their city, he said, at the invitation of their emperor; had come as a friend; had respected the inhabitants and their property; and, to avoid all cause of umbrage, had left a great part of his forces without the walls. They had received him with a show of kindness and hospitality, and, reposing on this, he had been decoyed into the snare, and found this kindness only a mask to cover the blackest perfidy.

The Cholulans were thunderstruck at the accusation. An undefined awe crept over them as they gazed on the mysterious strangers and felt themselves in the presence of beings who seemed to have the power of reading the thoughts scarcely formed in their bosoms. There was no use in prevarication or denial before such judges. They confessed the whole, and endeavored to excuse themselves by throwing the blame on Montezuma. Cortés, assuming an air of higher indignation at this, assured them that the pretence should not serve, since, even if well founded, it would be no justification; and he would now make such an example of them for their treachery that the report of it should ring throughout the wide borders of Anahuac!

The fatal signal, the discharge of an arquebuse, was then given. In an instant every musket and cross-bow was levelled at the unfortunate Cholulans in the court-yard, and a frightful volley poured into them as they stood crowded together like a herd of deer in the centre. They were taken by surprise, for they had not heard the preceding dialogue with the chiefs. They made scarcely any resistance to the Spaniards, who

followed up the discharge of their pieces by rushing on them with their swords; and, as the half-naked bodies of the natives afforded no protection, they hewed them down with as much ease as the reaper mows down the ripe corn in harvest-time. Some endeavored to scale the walls, but only afforded a surer mark to the arquebusiers and archers. Others threw themselves into the gateways, but were received on the long pikes of the soldiers who guarded them. Some few had better luck in hiding themselves under the heaps of slain with which the ground was soon loaded.

While this work of death was going on, the countrymen of the slaughtered Indians, drawn together by the noise of the massacre, had commenced a furious assault on the Spaniards from without. But Cortés had placed his battery of heavy guns in a position that commanded the avenues, and swept off the files of the assailants as they rushed on. In the intervals between the discharges, which, in the imperfect state of the science in that day, were much longer than in ours, he forced back the press by charging with the horse into the midst. The steeds, the guns, the weapons of the Spaniards were all new to the Cholulans. Notwithstanding the novelty of the terrific spectacle, the flash of fire-arms mingling with the deafening roar of the artillery as its thunders reverberated among the buildings, the despairing Indians pushed on to take the places of their fallen comrades.

While this fierce struggle was going forward, the Tlascalans, hearing the concerted signal, had advanced with quick pace into the city. They had bound, by order of Cortés, wreaths of sedge round their heads,

that they might the more surely be distinguished from the Cholulans.[1] Coming up in the very heat of the engagement, they fell on the defenceless rear of the townsmen, who, trampled down under the heels of the Castilian cavalry on one side, and galled by their vindictive enemies on the other, could no longer maintain their ground. They gave way, some taking refuge in the nearest buildings, which, being partly of wood, were speedily set on fire. Others fled to the temples. One strong party, with a number of priests at its head, got possession of the great *teocalli*. There was a vulgar tradition, already alluded to, that on removal of part of the walls the god would send forth an inundation to overwhelm his enemies. The superstitious Cholulans with great difficulty succeeded in wrenching away some of the stones in the walls of the edifice. But dust, not water, followed. Their false god deserted them in the hour of need. In despair they flung themselves into the wooden turrets that crowned the temple, and poured down stones, javelins, and burning arrows on the Spaniards, as they climbed the great staircase which, by a flight of one hundred and twenty steps, scaled the face of the pyramid. But the fiery shower fell harmless on the steel bonnets of the Christians, while they availed themselves of the burning shafts to set fire to the wooden citadel, which was speedily wrapt in flames. Still the garrison held out, and though

[1] "Usáron los de Tlaxcalla de un aviso muy bueno y les dió Hernando Cortés porque fueran conocidos y no morir entre los enemigos por yerro, porque sus armas y divisas eran casi de una manera; . . . y ansí se pusiéron en las cabezas unas guirnaldas de esparto á manera de torzales, y con esto eran conocidos los de nuestra parcialidad que no fué pequeño aviso." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

quarter, *it is said*, was offered, only one Cholulan availed himself of it. The rest threw themselves headlong from the parapet, or perished miserably in the flames.[a]

All was now confusion and uproar in the fair city which had so lately reposed in security and peace. The groans of the dying, the frantic supplications of the vanquished for mercy, were mingled with the loud battle-cries of the Spaniards as they rode down their enemy, and with the shrill whistle of the Tlascalans, who gave full scope to the long-cherished rancor of ancient rivalry. The tumult was still further swelled by the incessant rattle of musketry, and the crash of falling timbers, which sent up a volume of flame that outshone the ruddy light of morning, making altogether a hideous confusion of sights and sounds that converted the Holy City into a Pandemonium. As resistance slackened, the victors broke into the houses and sacred places, plundering them of whatever valuables they contained, plate, jewels, which were found in some quantity, wearing-apparel and provisions, the two last coveted even more than the former by the simple Tlascalans, thus facilitating a division of the spoil much to the satisfaction of their Christian confederates. Amidst this universal license, it is worthy of remark, the commands of Cortés were so far respected that no violence was offered to women or children, though these, as well as numbers of the men, were made prisoners to be swept into slavery by the

[a] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4, 45.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 40.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 60.

Tlascalans.[3] These scenes of violence had lasted some hours, when Cortés, moved by the entreaties of some Cholulan chiefs who had been reserved from the massacre, backed by the prayers of the Mexican envoys, consented, out of regard, as he said, to the latter, the representatives of Montezuma, to call off the soldiers, and put a stop, as well as he could, to further outrage.* Two of the caciques were, also, permitted to go to their countrymen with assurances of pardon and protection to all who would return to their obedience.

These measures had their effect. By the joint efforts of Cortés and the caciques, the tumult was with much difficulty appeased. The assailants, Spaniards and Indians, gathered under their respective banners, and the Cholulans, relying on the assurance of their chiefs, gradually returned to their homes.

The first act of Cortés was to prevail on the Tlascalan chiefs to liberate their captives.[4] Such was their deference to the Spanish commander that they acquiesced, though not without murmurs, contenting themselves, as they best could, with the rich spoil rifled

[3] "They killed nearly six thousand persons, but touched neither women nor children, for so it had been ordered." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 2.

[4] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., ubi supra.

* [Andrés de Tápia, who participated in the massacre, says that the work of destroying the city ("el trabajar por destruir la cibdad") went on for two days, before Cortés gave orders for it to cease, and that it was not till two or three days later that the inhabitants, many of whom had fled to the mountains and neighboring territory, obtained pardon and leave to return. Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, publicada por Joaquin García Icazbalceta, tom. ii.—ED.]

from the Cholulans, consisting of various luxuries long since unknown in Tlascala. His next care was to cleanse the city from its loathsome impurities, particularly from the dead bodies which lay festering in heaps in the streets and great square. The general, in his letter to Charles the Fifth, admits three thousand slain, most accounts say six, and some swell the amount yet higher. As the eldest and principal cacique was among the number, Cortés assisted the Cholulans in installing a successor in his place.[5] By these pacific measures confidence was gradually restored. The people in the environs, reassured, flocked into the capital to supply the place of the diminished population. The markets were again opened; and the usual avocations of an orderly, industrious community were resumed. Still, the long piles of black and smouldering ruins proclaimed the hurricane which had so lately swept over the city, and the walls surrounding the scene of slaughter in the great square, which were standing more than fifty years after the event, told the sad tale of the Massacre of Cholula.[6]

[5] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—The descendants of the principal Cholulan cacique are living at this day in Puebla, according to Bustamante. See Gomara, Crónica, trad. de Chimalpain (México, 1826), tom. i. p. 98, nota.

[6] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 66.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4, 45.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 60.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—Las Casas, in his printed treatise on the Destruction of the Indies, garnishes his account of these transactions with some additional and rather startling particulars. According to him, Cortés caused a hundred or more of the caciques to be impaled or roasted at the stake' He adds the report that, while the massacre

This passage in their history is one of those that have left a dark stain on the memory of the Conquerors. Nor can we contemplate at this day, without a shudder, the condition of this fair and flourishing capital thus invaded in its privacy and delivered over to the excesses of a rude and ruthless soldiery. But, to judge the action fairly, we must transport ourselves to the age when it happened. The difficulty that meets us in the outset is, to find a justification of the right of conquest, at all. But it should be remembered that religious infidelity, at this period, and till a much later, was regarded—no matter whether founded on igno-

in the court-yard was going on, the Spanish general repeated a scrap of an old *romance*, describing Nero as rejoicing over the burning ruins of Rome:

"Mira Nero de Tarpeya,
Á Roma como se ardia.
Gritos dan niños y viejos,
Y él de nada se dolia."
(Brevísima Relacion, p. 46.)

This is the first instance, I suspect, on record of any person being ambitious of finding a parallel for himself in that emperor! Bernal Diaz, who had seen "the interminable narrative," as he calls it, of Las Casas, treats it with great contempt. His own version—one of those chiefly followed in the text—was corroborated by the report of the missionaries, who, after the Conquest, visited Cholula, and investigated the affair with the aid of the priests and several old survivors who had witnessed it. It is confirmed in its substantial details by the other contemporary accounts. The excellent Bishop of Chiapa wrote with the avowed object of moving the sympathies of his countrymen in behalf of the oppressed natives; a generous object, certainly, but one that has too often warped his judgment from the strict line of historic impartiality. He was not an eye-witness of the transactions in New Spain, and was much too willing to receive whatever would make for his case, and to "over-red," if I may so say, his argument with such details of blood and slaughter as, from their very extravagance, carry their own refutation with them.

rance or education, whether hereditary or acquired, heretical or pagan—as a sin to be punished with fire and fagot in this world, and eternal suffering in the next. This doctrine, monstrous as it is, was the creed of the Romish, in other words, of the Christian Church,—the basis of the Inquisition, and of those other species of religious persecutions which have stained the annals, at some time or other, of nearly every nation in Christendom.[7] Under this code, the territory of the heathen, wherever found, was regarded as a sort of religious waif, which, in default of a legal proprietor, was claimed and taken possession of by the Holy See, and as such was freely given away by the head of the Church, to any temporal potentate whom he pleased, that would assume the burden of

7 For an illustration of the above remark the reader is referred to the closing pages of chap. 7, Part II., of the "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," where I have taken some pains to show how deep-settled were these convictions in Spain at the period with which we are now occupied. The world had gained little in liberality since the age of Dante, who could coolly dispose of the great and good of antiquity in one of the circles of Hell because—no fault of theirs, certainly—they had come into the world too soon. The memorable verses, like many others of the immortal bard, are a proof at once of the strength and weakness of the human understanding. They may be cited as a fair exponent of the popular feeling at the beginning of the sixteenth century:

"Ch' ei non peccaro, e, s'egli hanno mercedi,
Non basta, *perch' e' non ebber battesmo*,
Ch' è porta della fede che tu credi.
E, se furon dinanzi al Cristianesmo,
Non adorar debitamente Dio;
E di questi cotai son io medesmo
Per tai difetti, e non per altro rio,
Semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi
Che sanza speme vivemo in disio."

INFERNO, canto 4.

conquest.[8] Thus, Alexander the Sixth generously granted a large portion of the Western hemisphere to the Spaniards, and of the Eastern to the Portuguese. These lofty pretensions of the successors of the humble fisherman of Galilee, far from being nominal, were acknowledged and appealed to as conclusive in controversies between nations.[9]

With the right of conquest, thus conferred, came also the obligation, on which it may be said to have been founded, to retrieve the nations sitting in darkness from eternal perdition. This obligation was acknowledged by the best and the bravest, the gownsman in his closet, the missionary, and the warrior in the crusade. However much it may have been debased by temporal motives and mixed up with worldly considerations of ambition and avarice, it was still active in the mind of the Christian conqueror. We have seen how far paramount it was to every calculation of personal interest in the breast of Cortés. The concession of

[8] It is in the same spirit that the laws of Oleron, the maritime code of so high authority in the Middle Ages, abandon the property of the infidel, in common with that of pirates, as fair spoil to the true believer! "S'ilz sont pyrates, pilleurs, ou escumeurs de mer, ou Turcs, *et autres contraires et ennemis de nostredicte foy catholicque*, chascun peut prendre sur telles manieres de gens, *comme sur chiens, si peut l'on les desrobber et spolier de leurs biens sans pugnition.* C'est le jugement." Jugemens d'Oleron, Art. 45, ap. Collection de Lois maritimes, par J. M. Pardessus (ed. Paris, 1828), tom. i. p. 351.

[9] The famous bull of partition became the basis of the treaty of Tordesillas, by which the Castilian and Portuguese governments determined the boundary-line of their respective discoveries; a line that secured the vast empire of Brazil to the latter, which from priority of occupation should have belonged to their rivals. See the History of Ferdinand and Isabella, Part I. chap. 18; Part II. chap. 9,—the closing pages of each.

the Pope, then, founded on, and enforcing, the imperative duty of conversion,[10] was the assumed basis—and, in the apprehension of that age, a sound one—of the right of conquest.[11]

[10] It is the condition, unequivocally expressed and reiterated, on which Alexander VI., in his famous bulls of May 3d and 4th, 1493, conveys to Ferdinand and Isabella full and absolute right over all such territories in the Western World as may not have been previously occupied by Christian princes. See these precious documents, *in extenso*, apud Navarrete, Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos (Madrid, 1825), tom. ii. Nos. 17, 18.

[11] The ground on which Protestant nations assert a natural right to the fruits of their discoveries in the New World is very different. They consider that the earth was intended for cultivation, and that Providence never designed that hordes of wandering savages should hold a territory far more than necessary for their own maintenance, to the exclusion of civilized man. Yet it may be thought, as far as improvement of the soil is concerned, that this argument would afford us but an indifferent tenure for much of our own unoccupied and uncultivated territory, far exceeding what is demanded for our present or prospective support. As to a right founded on difference of civilization, this is obviously a still more uncertain criterion. It is to the credit of our Puritan ancestors that they did not avail themselves of any such interpretation of the law of nature, and still less rely on the powers conceded by King James's patent, asserting rights as absolute, nearly, as those claimed by the Roman See. On the contrary, they established their title to the soil by fair purchase of the aborigines; thus forming an honorable contrast to the policy pursued by too many of the settlers on the American continents. It should be remarked that, whatever difference of opinion may have subsisted between the Roman Catholic—or rather the Spanish and Portuguese—nations and the rest of Europe, in regard to the true foundation of their titles in a moral view, they have always been content, in their controversies with one another, to rest them exclusively on priority of discovery. For a brief view of the discussion, see Vattel (Droit des Gens, sec. 209), and especially Kent (Commentaries on American Law, vol. iii. lec. 51), where it is handled with much perspicuity and eloquence. The argument, as founded on the law of nations, may be found in the celebrated

This right could not, indeed, be construed to authorize any unnecessary act of violence to the natives. The present expedition, up to the period of its history at which we are now arrived, had probably been stained with fewer of such acts than almost any similar enterprise of the Spanish discoverers in the New World. Throughout the campaign, Cortés had prohibited all wanton injuries to the natives in person or property, and had punished the perpetrators of them with exemplary severity. He had been faithful to his friends, and, with perhaps a single exception, not unmerciful to his foes. Whether from policy or principle, it should be recorded to his credit; though, like every sagacious mind, he may have felt that principle and policy go together.

He had entered Cholula as a friend, at the invitation of the Indian emperor, who had a real, if not avowed, control over the state. He had been received as a friend, with every demonstration of good will; when, without any offence of his own or his followers, he found they were to be the victims of an insidious plot, —that they were standing on a mine which might be sprung at any moment and bury them all in its ruins. His safety, as he truly considered, left no alternative but to anticipate the blow of his enemies. Yet who can

case of Johnson *v.* McIntosh. (Wheaton, Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of the United States, vol. viii. p. 543, et seq.) If it were not treating a grave discussion too lightly, I should crave leave to refer the reader to the renowned Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York (book 1, chap. 5) for a luminous disquisition on this knotty question. At all events, he will find there the popular arguments subjected to the test of ridicule; a test showing, more than any reasoning can, how m- - -ther how little, they are really worth.

doubt that the punishment thus inflicted was excessive, —that the same end might have been attained by directing the blow against the guilty chiefs, instead of letting it fall on the ignorant rabble who but obeyed the commands of their masters? But when was it ever seen that fear, armed with power, was scrupulous in the exercise of it? or that the passions of a fierce soldiery, inflamed by conscious injuries, could be regulated in the moment of explosion?

We shall, perhaps, pronounce more impartially on the conduct of the Conquerors if we compare it with that of our own contemporaries under somewhat similar circumstances. The atrocities at Cholula were not so bad as those inflicted on the descendants of these very Spaniards, in the late war of the Peninsula, by the most polished nations of our time; by the British at Badajoz, for example,—at Tarragona, and a hundred other places, by the French. The wanton butchery, the ruin of property, and, above all, those outrages worse than death, from which the female part of the population were protected at Cholula, show a catalogue of enormities quite as black as those imputed to the Spaniards, and without the same apology for resentment,—with no apology, indeed, but that afforded by a brave and patriotic resistance. The consideration of these events, which, from their familiarity, make little impression on our senses, should render us more lenient in our judgments of the past, showing, as they do, that man in a state of excitement, savage or civilized, is much the same in every age. It may teach us —it is one of the best lessons of history—that, since such are the *inevitable* evils of war, even among the

most polished people, those who hold the destinies of nations in their hands, whether rulers or legislators, should submit to every sacrifice, save that of honor, before authorizing an appeal to arms. The extreme solicitude to avoid these calamities, by the aid of peaceful congresses and impartial mediation, is, on the whole, the strongest evidence, stronger than that afforded by the progress of science and art, of our boasted advance in civilization.

It is far from my intention to vindicate the cruel deeds of the old Conquerors. Let them lie heavy on their heads. They were an iron race, who perilled life and fortune in the cause; and, as they made little account of danger and suffering for themselves, they had little sympathy to spare for their unfortunate enemies. But, to judge them fairly, we must not do it by the lights of our own age. We must carry ourselves back to theirs, and take the point of view afforded by the civilization of their time. Thus only can we arrive at impartial criticism in reviewing the generations that are past. We must extend to them the same justice which we shall have occasion to ask from posterity, when, by the light of a higher civilization, it surveys the dark or doubtful passages in our own history, which hardly arrest the eye of the contemporary.

But, whatever be thought of this transaction in a moral view, as a stroke of policy it was unquestionable. The nations of Anahuac had beheld, with admiration mingled with awe, the little band of Christian warriors steadily advancing along the plateau in face of every obstacle, overturning army after army with as much ease, apparently, as the good ship throws off the angry

billows from her bows, or rather like the lava, which, rolling from their own volcanoes, holds on its course unchecked by obstacles, rock, tree, or building, bearing them along, or crushing and consuming them in its fiery path. The prowess of the Spaniards—"the white gods," as they were often called[12]—made them to be thought invincible. But it was not till their arrival at Cholula that the natives learned how terrible was their vengeance; and they trembled!

None trembled more than the Aztec emperor on his throne among the mountains. He read in these events the dark characters traced by the finger of Destiny.[13] He felt his empire melting away like a morning mist. He might well feel so. Some of the most important cities in the neighborhood of Cholula, intimidated by the fate of that capital, now sent their envoys to the Castilian camp, tendering their allegiance, and propitiating the favor of the strangers by rich presents of gold and slaves.[14] Montezuma, alarmed at these

[12] *Los Dioses blancos.*—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 40.

[13] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—In an old Aztec harangue, made as a matter of form on the accession of a prince, we find the following remarkable prediction: "Perhaps ye are dismayed at the prospect of the terrible calamities that are one day to overwhelm us, calamities foreseen and foretold, though not felt, by our fathers! . . . when the destruction and desolation of the empire shall come, when all shall be plunged in darkness, when the hour shall arrive in which they shall make us slaves throughout the land, and we shall be condemned to the lowest and most degrading offices!" (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 16.) This random shot of prophecy, which I have rendered literally, shows how strong and settled was the apprehension of some impending revolution.

[14] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 3.

signs of defection, took counsel again of his impotent deities; but, although the altars smoked with fresh hecatombs of human victims, he obtained no cheering response. He determined, therefore, to send another embassy to the Spaniards, disavowing any participation in the conspiracy of Cholula.

Meanwhile Cortés was passing his time in that capital. He thought that the impression produced by the late scenes, and by the present restoration of tranquillity, offered a fair opportunity for the good work of conversion. He accordingly urged the citizens to embrace the Cross and abandon the false guardians who had abandoned them in their extremity. But the traditions of centuries rested on the Holy City, shedding a halo of glory around it as "the sanctuary of the gods," the religious capital of Anahuac. It was too much to expect that the people would willingly resign this pre-eminence and descend to the level of an ordinary community. Still Cortés might have pressed the matter, however unpalatable, but for the renewed interposition of the wise Olmedo, who persuaded him to postpone it till after the reduction of the whole country.[15]

The Spanish general, however, had the satisfaction to break open the cages in which the victims for sacrifice were confined, and to dismiss the trembling inmates to liberty and life. He also seized upon the great *teocalli*, and devoted that portion of the building which, being of stone, had escaped the fury of the flames, to the purposes of a Christian church; while a crucifix of stone and lime, of gigantic dimensions, spreading out its arms above the city, proclaimed that the popula-

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 83.

tion below was under the protection of the Cross. On the same spot now stands a temple overshadowed by dark cypresses of unknown antiquity, and dedicated to Our Lady *de los Remedios*. An image of the Virgin presides over it, *said* to have been left by the Conqueror himself;[16] and an Indian ecclesiastic, a descendant of the ancient Cholulans, performs the peaceful services of the Roman Catholic communion on the spot where his ancestors celebrated the sanguinary rites of the mystic Quetzalcoatl.[17]

During the occurrence of these events, envoys arrived from Mexico. They were charged, as usual, with a rich present of plate and ornaments of gold, among others, artificial birds in imitation of turkeys, with plumes of the same precious metal. To these were added fifteen hundred cotton dresses of delicate fabric. The emperor even expressed his regret at the catastrophe of Cholula, vindicated himself from any share in the conspiracy, which he said had brought deserved retribution on the heads of its authors, and explained the existence of an Aztec force in the neighborhood by the necessity of repressing some disorders there.[18]

One cannot contemplate this pusillanimous conduct of Montezuma without mingled feelings of pity and contempt. It is not easy to reconcile his assumed innocence of the plot with many circumstances connected with it. But it must be remembered here, and

[16] Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 13.

[17] Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 32.

[18] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 69.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 63.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.

always, that his history is to be collected solely from Spanish writers and such of the natives as flourished after the Conquest, when the country had become a colony of Spain. Not an Aztec record of the primitive age survives, in a form capable of interpretation.[19] It is the hard fate of this unfortunate monarch to be wholly indebted for his portraiture to the pencil of his enemies.

More than a fortnight had elapsed since the entrance of the Spaniards into Cholula, and Cortés now resolved without loss of time to resume his march towards the capital. His rigorous reprisals had so far intimidated the Cholulans that he felt assured he should no longer leave an active enemy in his rear, to annoy him in case of retreat. He had the satisfaction, before his departure, to heal the feud—in outward appearance, at least —that had so long subsisted between the Holy City and Tlascala, and which, under the revolution which so soon changed the destinies of the country, never revived.

[19] The language of the text may appear somewhat too unqualified, considering that three Aztec codices exist with interpretations. (See *ante*, vol. i. pp. 105–108.) But they contain very few and general allusions to Montezuma, and these strained through commentaries of Spanish monks, oftentimes manifestly irreconcilable with the genuine Aztec notions. Even such writers as Ixtlilxochitl and Camargo, from whom, considering their Indian descent, we might expect more independence, seem less solicitous to show this, than their loyalty to the new faith and country of their adoption. Perhaps the most honest Aztec record of the period is to be obtained from the volumes, the twelfth book particularly, of Father Sahagun, embodying the traditions of the natives soon after the Conquest. This portion of his great work was rewritten by its author, and considerable changes were made in it, at a later period of his life. Yet it may be doubted if the reformed version reflects the traditions of the country as faithfully as the original, which is still in manuscript, and which I have chiefly followed.

It was with some disquietude that he now received an application from his Cempoallan allies to be allowed to withdraw from the expedition and return to their own homes. They had incurred too deeply the resentment of the Aztec emperor, by their insults to his collectors, and by their co-operation with the Spaniards, to care to trust themselves in his capital. It was in vain Cortés endeavored to reassure them by promises of his protection. Their habitual distrust and dread of "the great Montezuma" were not to be overcome. The general learned their determination with regret, for they had been of infinite service to the cause by their stanch fidelity and courage. All this made it the more difficult for him to resist their reasonable demand. Liberally recompensing their services, therefore, from the rich wardrobe and treasures of the emperor, he took leave of his faithful followers, before his own departure from Cholula. He availed himself of their return to send letters to Juan de Escalante, his lieutenant at Vera Cruz, acquainting him with the successful progress of the expedition. He enjoined on that officer to strengthen the fortifications of the place, so as the better to resist any hostile interference from Cuba, — an event for which Cortés was ever on the watch, — and to keep down revolt among the natives. He especially commended the Totonacs to his protection, as allies whose fidelity to the Spaniards exposed them, in no slight degree, to the vengeance of the Aztecs.[20]

[20] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 84, 85. — Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 67. — Gomara, Crónica, cap. 60. — Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARCH RESUMED.—ASCENT OF THE GREAT VOLCANO.—VALLEY OF MEXICO.—IMPRESSION ON THE SPANIARDS.—CONDUCT OF MONTEZUMA.—THEY DESCEND INTO THE VALLEY.

1519.

EVERYTHING being now restored to quiet in Cholula, the allied army of Spaniards and Tlascalans set forward in high spirits, and resumed the march on Mexico. The road lay through the beautiful savannas and luxuriant plantations that spread out for several leagues in every direction. On the march, they were met occasionally by embassies from the neighboring places, anxious to claim the protection of the white men, and to propitiate them by gifts, especially of gold, their appetite for which was generally known throughout the country.

Some of these places were allies of the Tlascalans, and all showed much discontent with the oppressive rule of Montezuma. The natives cautioned the Spaniards against putting themselves in his power by entering his capital; and they stated, as evidence of his hostile disposition, that he had caused the direct road to it to be blocked up, that the strangers might be compelled to choose another, which, from its narrow passes and strong positions, would enable him to take them at great disadvantage.

The information was not lost on Cortés, who kept a strict eye on the movements of the Mexican envoys, and redoubled his own precautions against surprise.[1] Cheerful and active, he was ever where his presence was needed, sometimes in the van, at others in the rear, encouraging the weak, stimulating the sluggish, and striving to kindle in the breasts of others the same courageous spirit which glowed in his own. At night he never omitted to go the rounds, to see that every man was at his post. On one occasion his vigilance had wellnigh proved fatal to him. He approached so near a sentinel that the man, unable to distinguish his person in the dark, levelled his cross-bow at him, when fortunately an exclamation of the general, who gave the watchword of the night, arrested a movement which might else have brought the campaign to a close and given a respite for some time longer to the empire of Montezuma.

The army came at length to the place mentioned by the friendly Indians, where the road forked, and one arm of it was found, as they had foretold, obstructed with large trunks of trees, and huge stones which had been strewn across it. Cortés inquired the meaning of this from the Mexican ambassadors. They said it was done by the emperor's orders, to prevent their taking a route which, after some distance, they would find nearly impracticable for the cavalry. They acknowledged, however, that it was the most direct road; and Cortés, declaring that this was enough to decide

[1] "We walked," says Diaz, in the homely but expressive Spanish proverb, "with our beards over our shoulders"—*la barba sobre el ombro.* Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 86.

him in favor of it, as the Spaniards made no account of obstacles, commanded the rubbish to be cleared away. Some of the timber might still be seen by the road-side, as Bernal Diaz tells us, many years after. The event left little doubt in the general's mind of the meditated treachery of the Mexicans. But he was too politic to betray his suspicions.[2]

They were now leaving the pleasant champaign country, as the road wound up the bold sierra which separates the great plateaus of Mexico and Puebla. The air, as they ascended, became keen and piercing; and the blasts, sweeping down the frozen sides of the mountains, made the soldiers shiver in their thick harness of cotton, and benumbed the limbs of both men and horses.

They were passing between two of the highest mountains on the North American continent; Popocatepetl, "the hill that smokes," and Iztaccihuatl, or "white woman,"[3]—a name suggested, doubtless, by the bright robe of snow spread over its broad and broken surface. A puerile superstition of the Indians regarded these celebrated mountains as gods, and Iztaccihuatl as the wife of her more formidable neighbor.[4] A tradition of a higher character described the northern volcano as the abode of the departed spirits of wicked rulers, whose fiery agonies in their prison-house caused the

[2] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 86.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 70.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 41.

[3] "Llamaban al volcan Popocatépetl, y á la sierra nevada Iztaccihuatl, que quiere decir la sierra que humea, y la blanca muger." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[4] "La Sierra nevada y el volcan los tenian por Dioses; y que el volcan y la Sierra nevada eran marido y muger." Ibid., MS.

fearful bellowings and convulsions in times of eruption. It was the classic fable of antiquity.[5] These superstitious legends had invested the mountain with a mysterious horror, that made the natives shrink from attempting its ascent, which, indeed, was from natural causes a work of incredible difficulty.

The great *volcan*,[6] as Popocatepetl was called, rose to the enormous height of 17,852 feet above the level of the sea; more than 2000 feet above the "monarch of mountains,"—the highest elevation in Europe.[7] During the present century it has rarely given evidence of its volcanic origin, and "the hill that smokes" has almost forfeited its claim to the appellation. But at the time of the Conquest it was frequently in a state of activity, and raged with uncommon fury while the Spaniards were at Tlascala; an evil omen, it was thought, for the natives of Anahuac. Its head, gathered into a regular cone by the deposit of successive eruptions, wore the usual form of volcanic mountains when

5 Gomara, Crónica, cap. 62.

> "Ætna Giganteos nunquam tacitura triumphos,
> Enceladi bustum, qui saucia terga revinctus
> Spirat inexhaustum flagranti pectore sulphur."
> CLAUDIAN, De Rapt. Pros., lib. 1, v. 152.

6 The old Spaniards called any lofty mountain by that name, though never having given signs of combustion. Thus, Chimborazo was called a *volcan de nieve*, or "snow volcano" (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. p. 162); and that enterprising traveller, Stephens, notices the *volcan de agua*, "water volcano," in the neighborhood of Antigua Guatemala. Incidents of Travel in Chiapas, Central America, and Yucatan (New York, 1841), vol. i. chap. 13.

7 Mont Blanc, according to M. de Saussure, is 15,670 feet high. For the estimate of Popocatepetl, see an elaborate communication in the "Revista Mexicana," tom. ii. No. 4.

not disturbed by the falling in of the crater. Soaring towards the skies, with its silver sheet of everlasting snow, it was seen far and wide over the broad plains of Mexico and Puebla, the first object which the morning sun greeted in his rising, the last where his evening rays were seen to linger, shedding a glorious effulgence over its head, that contrasted strikingly with the ruinous waste of sand and lava immediately below, and the deep fringe of funereal pines that shrouded its base.

The mysterious terrors which hung over the spot, and the wild love of adventure, made some of the Spanish cavaliers desirous to attempt the ascent, which the natives declared no man could accomplish and live. Cortés encouraged them in the enterprise, willing to show the Indians that no achievement was above the dauntless daring of his followers. One of his captains, accordingly, Diego Ordaz, with nine Spaniards, and several Tlascalans, encouraged by their example, undertook the ascent. It was attended with more difficulty than had been anticipated.

The lower region was clothed with a dense forest, so thickly matted that in some places it was scarcely possible to penetrate it. It grew thinner, however, as they advanced, dwindling by degrees into a straggling, stunted vegetation, till, at the height of somewhat more than thirteen thousand feet, it faded away altogether. The Indians who had held on thus far, intimidated by the strange subterraneous sounds of the volcano, even then in a state of combustion, now left them. The track opened on a black surface of glazed volcanic sand and of lava, the broken fragments of which, arrested

in its boiling progress in a thousand fantastic forms, opposed continual impediments to their advance. Amidst these, one huge rock, the *Pico del Fraile*, a conspicuous object from below, rose to the perpendicular height of a hundred and fifty feet, compelling them to take a wide circuit. They soon came to the limits of perpetual snow, where new difficulties presented themselves, as the treacherous ice gave an imperfect footing, and a false step might precipitate them into the frozen chasms that yawned around. To increase their distress, respiration in these aerial regions became so difficult that every effort was attended with sharp pains in the head and limbs. Still they pressed on, till, drawing nearer the crater, such volumes of smoke, sparks, and cinders were belched forth from its burning entrails, and driven down the sides of the mountain, as nearly suffocated and blinded them. It was too much even for their hardy frames to endure, and, however reluctantly, they were compelled to abandon the attempt on the eve of its completion. They brought back some huge icicles,—a curious sight in these tropical regions,—as a trophy of their achievement, which, however imperfect, was sufficient to strike the minds of the natives with wonder, by showing that with the Spaniards the most appalling and mysterious perils were only as pastimes. The undertaking was eminently characteristic of the bold spirit of the cavalier of that day, who, not content with the dangers that lay in his path, seemed to court them from the mere Quixotic love of adventure. A report of the affair was transmitted to the emperor Charles the Fifth, and the family of Ordaz was allowed to commemorate

the exploit by assuming a burning mountain on their escutcheon.[8]

The general was not satisfied with the result. Two years after, he sent up another party, under Francisco Montaño, a cavalier of determined resolution. The object was to obtain sulphur to assist in making gunpowder for the army. The mountain was quiet at this time, and the expedition was attended with better success. The Spaniards, five in number, climbed to the very edge of the crater, which presented an irregular ellipse at its mouth, more than a league in circumference. Its depth might be from eight hundred to a thousand feet. A lurid flame burned gloomily at the bottom, sending up a sulphureous steam, which, cooling as it rose, was precipitated on the sides of the cavity. The party cast lots, and it fell on Montaño himself, to descend in a basket into this hideous abyss, into which he was lowered by his companions to the depth of four hundred feet! This was repeated several times, till the adventurous cavalier had collected a sufficient quantity of sulphur for the wants of the army.[9] This doughty enterprise excited general admiration at the time. Cortés concludes his report of it to the emperor with

[8] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 70.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 78.—The latter writer speaks of the ascent as made when the army lay at Tlascala, and of the attempt as perfectly successful. The general's letter, written soon after the event, with no motive for misstatement, is the better authority. See, also, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 18.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 308.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 62.

[9] [Montaño's family remained in Mexico after the Conquest, and his daughter received a pension from the government. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. i. apénd. 2.]

the judicious reflection that it would be less inconvenient, on the whole, to import their powder from Spain.[10]

But it is time to return from our digression, which may perhaps be excused, as illustrating, in a remarkable manner, the chimerical spirit of enterprise—not inferior to that in his own romances of chivalry—which glowed in the breast of the Spanish cavalier in the sixteenth century.

The army held on its march through the intricate gorges of the sierra. The route was nearly the same as that pursued at the present day by the courier from the capital to Puebla, by the way of Mecameca.[11] It was not that usually taken by travellers from Vera

[10] Rel. Ter. y Quarta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 318, 380.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 3, cap. 1.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 41.—M. de Humboldt doubts the fact of Montaño's descent into the crater, thinking it more probable that he obtained the sulphur through some lateral crevice in the mountain. (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 164.)* No attempt—at least, no successful one—was made to gain the summit of Popocatepetl, since this of Montaño, till the present century. In 1827 it was reached in two expeditions, and again in 1833 and 1834. A very full account of the last, containing many interesting details and scientific observations, was written by Federico de Gerolt, one of the party, and published in the periodical already referred to. (Revista Mexicana, tom. i. pp. 461–482.) The party from the topmost peak, which commanded a full view of the less elevated Iztaccihuatl, saw no vestige of a crater in that mountain, contrary to the opinion usually received.

[11] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom iv. p. 17.

* [There would seem to have been no grounds for the doubt expressed by Humboldt, as the sulphur is now nearly exhausted, having been regularly collected by Indian laborers, lowered into the crater by means of a rope of hide attached to a windlass. Tylor, Anahuac, p. 269.—ED.]

Cruz, who follow the more circuitous road round the northern base of Iztaccihuatl, as less fatiguing than the other, though inferior in picturesque scenery and romantic points of view. The icy winds, that now swept down the sides of the mountains, brought with them a tempest of arrowy sleet and snow, from which the Christians suffered even more than the Tlascalans, reared from infancy among the wild solitudes of their own native hills. As night came on, their sufferings would have been intolerable, but they luckily found a shelter in the commodious stone buildings which the Mexican government had placed at stated intervals along the roads for the accommodation of the traveller and their own couriers. It little dreamed it was providing a protection for its enemies.

The troops, refreshed by a night's rest, succeeded, early on the following day, in gaining the crest of the sierra of Ahualco, which stretches like a curtain between the two great mountains on the north and south. Their progress was now comparatively easy, and they marched forward with a buoyant step, as they felt they were treading the soil of Montezuma.

They had not advanced far, when, turning an angle of the sierra, they suddenly came on a view which more than compensated the toils of the preceding day. It was that of the Valley of Mexico, or Tenochtitlan, as more commonly called by the natives; which, with its picturesque assemblage of water, woodland, and cultivated plains, its shining cities and shadowy hills, was spread out like some gay and gorgeous panorama before them. In the highly rarefied atmosphere of these upper regions, even remote objects have a brilliancy of color-

ing and a distinctness of outline which seem to annihilate distance.[28] Stretching far away at their feet, were seen noble forests of oak, sycamore, and cedar, and beyond, yellow fields of maize and the towering maguey, intermingled with orchards and blooming gardens; for flowers, in such demand for their religious festivals, were even more abundant in this populous valley than in other parts of Anahuac. In the centre of the great basin were beheld the lakes, occupying then a much larger portion of its surface than at present; their borders thickly studded with towns and hamlets, and, in the midst,—like some Indian empress with her coronal of pearls,—the fair city of Mexico, with her white towers and pyramidal temples, reposing, as it were, on the bosom of the waters,—the far-famed "Venice of the Aztecs." High over all rose the royal hill of Chapoltepec, the residence of the Mexican monarchs, crowned with the same grove of gigantic cypresses which at this day fling their broad shadows over the land. In the distance beyond the blue waters of the lake, and nearly screened by intervening foliage, was seen a shining speck, the rival capital of Tezcuco, and, still farther on, the dark belt of porphyry, girdling the Valley around, like a rich setting which Nature had devised for the fairest of her jewels.

Such was the beautiful vision which broke on the eyes of the Conquerors. And even now, when so sad a change has come over the scene; when the stately forests have been laid low, and the soil, unsheltered

[28] The lake of Tezcuco, on which stood the capital of Mexico, is 2277 metres—nearly 7500 feet—above the sea. Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 45.

from the fierce radiance of a tropical sun, is in many places abandoned to sterility; when the waters have retired, leaving a broad and ghastly margin white with the incrustation of salts, while the cities and hamlets on their borders have mouldered into ruins;—even now that desolation broods over the landscape, so indestructible are the lines of beauty which Nature has traced on its features, that no traveller, however cold, can gaze on them with any other emotions than those of astonishment and rapture.[13]

What, then, must have been the emotions of the Spaniards, when, after working their toilsome way into the upper air, the cloudy tabernacle parted before their eyes, and they beheld these fair scenes in all their pristine magnificence and beauty! It was like the spectacle which greeted the eyes of Moses from the summit of Pisgah, and, in the warm glow of their feelings, they cried out, "It is the promised land!"[14]

But these feelings of admiration were soon followed by others of a very different complexion, as they saw in all this the evidences of a civilization and power far superior to anything they had yet encountered. The more timid, disheartened by the prospect, shrunk from a contest so unequal, and demanded, as they had done on some former occasions, to be led back again to Vera Cruz.

[13] It is unnecessary to refer to the pages of modern travellers, who, however they may differ in taste, talent, or feeling, all concur in the impressions produced on them by the sight of this beautiful valley.

[14] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 41.—It may call to the reader's mind the memorable view of the fair plains of Italy which Hannibal displayed to his hungry barbarians after a similar march through the wild passes of the Alps, as reported by the prince of historic painters. Livy, Hist., lib. 21, cap. 35.

Such was not the effect produced on the sanguine spirit of the general. His avarice was sharpened by the display of the dazzling spoil at his feet; and, if he felt a natural anxiety at the formidable odds, his confidence was renewed, as he gazed on the lines of his veterans, whose weather-beaten visages and battered armor told of battles won and difficulties surmounted, while his bold barbarians, with appetites whetted by the view of their enemies' country, seemed like eagles on the mountains, ready to pounce upon their prey. By argument, entreaty, and menace, he endeavored to restore the faltering courage of the soldiers, urging them not to think of retreat, now that they had reached the goal for which they had panted, and the golden gates were opened to receive them. In these efforts he was well seconded by the brave cavaliers, who held honor as dear to them as fortune; until the dullest spirits caught somewhat of the enthusiasm of their leaders, and the general had the satisfaction to see his hesitating columns, with their usual buoyant step, once more on their march down the slopes of the sierra.[15]

With every step of their progress, the woods became thinner; patches of cultivated land more frequent; and hamlets were seen in the green and sheltered nooks, the inhabitants of which, coming out to meet them, gave the troops a kind reception. Everywhere they heard complaints of Montezuma, especially of the unfeeling manner in which he carried off their young men to recruit his armies, and their maidens for his

[15] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 64.—Oviedo, Hist de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.

harem. These symptoms of discontent were noticed with satisfaction by Cortés, who saw that Montezuma's "mountain-throne," as it was called, was indeed seated on a volcano, with the elements of combustion so active within that it seemed as if any hour migl t witness an explosion. He encouraged the disaffected natives to rely on his protection, as he had come to redress their wrongs. He took advantage, moreover, of their favorable dispositions, to scatter among them such gleams of spiritual light as time and the preaching of Father Olmedo could afford.

He advanced by easy stages, somewhat retarded by the crowd of curious inhabitants gathered on the highways to see the strangers, and halting at every spot of interest or importance. On the road, he was met by another embassy from the capital. It consisted of several Aztec lords, freighted, as usual, with a rich largess of gold, and robes of delicate furs and feathers. The message of the emperor was couched in the same deprecatory terms as before. He even condescended to bribe the return of the Spaniards, by promising, in that event, four loads of gold to the general, and one to each of the captains,[16] with a yearly tribute to their sovereign. So effectually had the lofty and naturally courageous spirit of the barbarian monarch been subdued by the influence of superstition!

But the man whom the hostile array of armies could not daunt was not to be turned from his purpose by a woman's prayers. He received the embassy with his usual courtesy, declaring, as before, that he could not

[16] A load for a Mexican *tamane* was about fifty pounds, or eight hundred ounces. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 69, nota.

answer it to his own sovereign if he were now to return without visiting the emperor in his capital. It would be much easier to arrange matters by a personal interview than by distant negotiation. The Spaniards came in the spirit of peace. Montezuma would so find it; but, should their presence prove burdensome to him, it would be easy for them to relieve him of it.[17]

The Aztec monarch, meanwhile, was a prey to the most dismal apprehensions. It was intended that the embassy above noticed should reach the Spaniards before they crossed the mountains. When he learned that this was accomplished, and that the dread strangers were on their march across the Valley, the very threshold of his capital, the last spark of hope died away in his bosom. Like one who suddenly finds himself on the brink of some dark and yawning gulf, he was too much bewildered to be able to rally his thoughts, or even to comprehend his situation. He was the victim of an absolute destiny, against which no foresight or precautions could have availed. It was as if the strange beings who had thus invaded his shores had dropped from some distant planet, so different were they from all he had ever seen, in appearance and manners; so superior—though a mere handful in numbers—to the banded nations of Anahuac in strength and science and all the fearful accompaniments of war! They were now in the Valley. The huge mountain screen, which nature had so kindly drawn around it for its defence,

[17] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 12.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 73.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2. lib. 7, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 64.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind, MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87.

had been overleaped. The golden visions of security and repose in which he had so long indulged, the lordly sway descended from his ancestors, his broad imperial domain, were all to pass away. It seemed like some terrible dream,—from which he was now, alas! to awake to a still more terrible reality.

In a paroxysm of despair, he shut himself up in his palace, refused food, and sought relief in prayer and in sacrifice. But the oracles were dumb. He then adopted the more sensible expedient of calling a council of his principal and oldest nobles. Here was the same division of opinion which had before prevailed. Cacama, the young king of Tezcuco, his nephew, counselled him to receive the Spaniards courteously, as ambassadors, so styled by themselves, of a foreign prince. Cuitlahua, Montezuma's more warlike brother, urged him to muster his forces on the instant, and drive back the invaders from his capital or die in its defence. But the monarch found it difficult to rally his spirits for this final struggle. With downcast eye and dejected mien, he exclaimed, "Of what avail is resistance, when the gods have declared themselves against us?[18] Yet I mourn most for the old and infirm, the women and children, too feeble to fight or to fly. For myself and the brave men around me, we must bare our breasts to the storm, and meet it as we may!" Such are the sorrowful and sympathetic tones in which the Aztec emperor is said to have uttered the bitterness of his grief. He would have acted a more glorious part had

[18] This was not the sentiment of the Roman hero:

"Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni!"

LUCAN, lib. 1, v. 128.

he put his capital in a posture of defence, and prepared, like the last of the Palæologi, to bury himself under its ruins.[19]

He straightway prepared to send a last embassy to the Spaniards, with his nephew, the lord of Tezcuco, at its head, to welcome them to Mexico.

The Christian army, meanwhile, had advanced as far as Amaquemecan, a well-built town of several thousand inhabitants. They were kindly received by the cacique, lodged in large, commodious, stone buildings, and at their departure presented, among other things, with gold to the amount of three thousand *castellanos*.[20] Having halted there a couple of days, they descended among flourishing plantations of maize and of maguey, the latter of which might be called the Aztec vineyards, towards the lake of Chalco. Their first resting-place was Ajotzinco, a town of considerable size, with a great part of it then standing on piles in the water. It was the first specimen which the Spaniards had seen of this maritime architecture. The canals which intersected the city, instead of streets, presented an animated scene, from the number of barks which glided up and down freighted with provisions and other articles for the inhabitants. The Spaniards were particularly struck with the style and commodious structure of the houses, built chiefly of stone, and with the general aspect of wealth and even elegance which prevailed there.

[19] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 13.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 44.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 63.

[20] "El señor de esta provincia y pueblo me dió hasta quarenta esclavas, y tres mil castellanos; y dos dias que allí estuve nos proveyó muy cumplidamente de todo lo necesario para nuestra comida." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 74.

Though received with tne greatest show of hospitality, Cortés found some occasion for distrust in the eagerness manifested by the people to see and approach the Spaniards.[21] Not content with gazing at them in the roads, some even made their way stealthily into their quarters, and fifteen or twenty unhappy Indians were shot down by the sentinels as spies. Yet there appears, as well as we can judge at this distance of time, to have been no real ground for such suspicion. The undisguised jealousy of the court, and the cautions he had received from his allies, while they very properly put the general on his guard, seem to have given an unnatural acuteness, at least in the present instance, to his perceptions of danger.[22]

[21] "De todas partes era infinita la gente que de un cabo é de otro concurrian á mirar á los Españoles, é maravillábanse mucho de los ver. Tenian grande espacio é atencion en mirar los caballos; decian, 'Estos son Teules,' que quiere decir Demonios." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 45.

[22] Cortés tells the affair coolly enough to the emperor. "And that night I kept such guard that of the spies—as well those who came across the water in canoes as those who descended from the sierra to watch for an opportunity of accomplishing their design—fifteen or twenty were discovered in the morning that had been killed by our men; so that few returned with the information they had come to get." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 74.*

*[Cortés cannot be blamed for adopting such precautions as any good general would have thought it culpable to neglect; while his repeated warnings to the natives not to approach the camp after sunset show his anxiety to impress them with a sense of the danger. "Sabed," he said to the chiefs, "que estos que conmigo vienen no duermen de noche, é si duermen es un poco cuando es de dia; é de noche están con sus armas, é cualquiera que ven que anda en pié ó entra do ellos están, luego lo matan; é yo no basto á lo resistir; por tanto, haceldo así saber á toda vuestra gente, é decildes que despues de puesto el

Early on the following morning, as the army was preparing to leave the place, a courier came, requesting the general to postpone his departure till after the arrival of the king of Tezcuco, who was advancing to meet him. It was not long before he appeared, borne in a palanquin or litter, richly decorated with plates of gold and precious stones, having pillars curiously wrought, supporting a canopy of green plumes, a favorite color with the Aztec princes. He was accompanied by a numerous suite of nobles and inferior attendants. As he came into the presence of Cortés, the lord of Tezcuco descended from his palanquin, and the obsequious officers swept the ground before him as he advanced. He appeared to be a young man of about twenty-five years of age, with a comely presence, erect and stately in his deportment. He made the Mexican salutation usually addressed to persons of high rank, touching the earth with his right hand, and raising it to his head. Cortés embraced him as he rose, when the young prince informed him that he came as the representative of Montezuma, to bid the Spaniards welcome to his capital. He then presented the general with three pearls of uncommon size and lustre. Cortés, in return, threw over Cacama's neck a chain of cut glass, which, where glass was as rare as diamonds, might be admitted to have a value as real as the latter. After this interchange of courtesies, and the most friendly and respectful assurances on the part of Cortés, the Indian prince withdrew, leaving the Spaniards

sol ninguna venga do estamos, porque morirá, *é á mí me pesará de los que murieren.*" Relacion hecha por el Señor Andrés de Tápia sobre la Conquista de México.—ED.]

strongly impressed with the superiority of his state and bearing over anything they had hitherto seen in the country.[23]

Resuming its march, the army kept along the southern borders of the lake of Chalco, overshadowed, at that time, by noble woods, and by orchards glowing with autumnal fruits, of unknown names, but rich and tempting hues. More frequently it passed through cultivated fields waving with the yellow harvest, and irrigated by canals introduced from the neighboring lake; the whole showing a careful and economical husbandry, essential to the maintenance of a crowded population.

Leaving the main land, the Spaniards came on the great dike or causeway, which stretches some four or five miles in length and divides lake Chalco from Xochicalco on the west. It was a lance in breadth in the narrowest part, and in some places wide enough for eight horsemen to ride abreast. It was a solid structure of stone and lime, running directly through the lake, and struck the Spaniards as one of the most remarkable works which they had seen in the country.

As they passed along, they beheld the gay spectacle of multitudes of Indians darting up and down in their light pirogues, eager to catch a glimpse of the strangers, or bearing the products of the country to the neighboring cities. They were amazed, also, by the sight

[23] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 75.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 64.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—"We esteemed it a great matter, and said amongst ourselves, If this cacique appeared in such state, what must be that displayed by the great Montezuma?" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87.

of the *chinampas*, or floating gardens,—those wandering islands of verdure, to which we shall have occasion to return hereafter,—teeming with flowers and vegetables, and moving like rafts over the waters. All round the margin, and occasionally far in the lake, they beheld little towns and villages, which, half concealed by the foliage, and gathered in white clusters round the shore, looked in the distance like companies of wild swans riding quietly on the waves. A scene so new and wonderful filled their rude hearts with amazement. It seemed like enchantment; and they could find nothing to compare it with but the magical pictures in the "Amadis de Gaula."[24] Few pictures, indeed, in that or any other legend of chivalry, could surpass the realities of their own experience. The life of the adventurer in the New World was romance put into action. What wonder, then, if the Spaniard of that day, feeding his imagination with dreams of enchantment at home and with its realities abroad, should have displayed a Quixotic enthusiasm,—a romantic exaltation of character, not to be comprehended by the colder spirits of other lands!

Midway across the lake the army halted at the town of Cuitlahuac, a place of moderate size, but distinguished by the beauty of the buildings,—the most beautiful, according to Cortés, that he had yet seen in

[24] "Nos quedámos admirados," exclaims Diaz, with simple wonder, "y deziamos que parecia á las casas de encantamento, que cuentan en el libro de Amadis!" Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87. An edition of this celebrated romance in its Castilian dress had appeared before this time, as the prologue to the second edition of 1521 speaks of a former one in the reign of the "Catholic Sovereigns." See Cervantes, Don Quixote, ed. Pellicer (Madrid, 1797), tom. i., Discurso prelim.

the country.[25] After taking some refreshment at this place, they continued their march along the dike. Though broader in this northern section, the troops found themselves much embarrassed by the throng of Indians, who, not content with gazing on them from the boats, climbed up the causeway and lined the sides of the road. The general, afraid that his ranks might be disordered, and that too great familiarity might diminish a salutary awe in the natives, was obliged to resort not merely to command, but menace, to clear a passage. He now found, as he advanced, a considerable change in the feelings shown towards the government. He heard only of the pomp and magnificence, nothing of the oppressions, of Montezuma. Contrary to the usual fact, it seemed that the respect for the court was greatest in its immediate neighborhood.

From the causeway, the army descended on that narrow point of land which divides the waters of the Chalco from the Tezcucan lake, but which in those days was overflowed for many a mile now laid bare.[26]

[25] "Una ciudad, la mas hermosa, aunque pequeña, que hasta entonces habiamos visto, assí de muy bien obradas Casas, y Torres, como de la buena órden, que en el fundamento de ella habia por ser armada toda sobre Agua." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 76.) The Spaniards gave this aquatic city the name of Venezuela, or Little Venice. Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 2, cap. 4.

[26] M. de Humboldt has dotted the *conjectural* limits of the ancient lake in his admirable chart of the Mexican Valley. (Atlas géographique et physique de la Nouvelle-Espagne (Paris, 1811), carte 3.) Notwithstanding his great care, it is not easy always to reconcile his topography with the itineraries of the Conquerors, so much has the face of the country been changed by natural and artificial causes. It

Traversing this peninsula, they entered the royal residence of Iztapalapan, a place containing twelve or fifteen thousand houses, according to Cortés.[27] It was governed by Cuitlahua, the emperor's brother, who, to do greater honor to the general, had invited the lords of some neighboring cities, of the royal house of Mexico, like himself, to be present at the interview. This was conducted with much ceremony, and, after the usual present of gold and delicate stuffs,[28] a collation was served to the Spaniards in one of the great halls of the palace. The excellence of the architecture here, also, excited the admiration of the general, who does not hesitate, in the glow of his enthusiasm, to pronounce some of the buildings equal to the best in Spain.[29] They were of stone, and the spacious apartments had roofs of odorous cedar-wood, while the walls were tapestried with fine cotton stained with brilliant colors.

is still less possible to reconcile their narratives with the maps of Clavigero, Lopez, Robertson, and others, defying equally topography and history.

[27] Several writers notice a visit of the Spaniards to Tezcuco on the way to the capital. (Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 42.—Solís, Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 9.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 4.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 74.) This improbable episode—which, it may be remarked, has led these authors into some geographical perplexities, not to say blunders—is altogether too remarkable to have been passed over in silence in the minute relation of Bernal Diaz, and that of Cortés, neither of whom alludes to it.

[28] "É me diéron," says Cortés, "hasta tres, ó quatro mil Castellanos, y algunas Esclavas, y Ropa, é me hiciéron muy buen acogimiento." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 76.

[29] "Tiene el Señor de ella unas Casas nuevas, que aun no están acabadas, que son tan buenas como las mejores de España, digo de grandes y bien labradas." Ibid., p. 77.

But the pride of Iztapalapan, on which its lord had freely lavished his care and his revenues, was its celebrated gardens. They covered an immense tract of land; were laid out in regular squares, and the paths intersecting them were bordered with trellises, supporting creepers and aromatic shrubs that loaded the air with their perfumes. The gardens were stocked with fruit-trees, imported from distant places, and with the gaudy family of flowers which belonged to the Mexican flora, scientifically arranged, and growing luxuriant in the equable temperature of the table-land. The natural dryness of the atmosphere was counteracted by means of aqueducts and canals that carried water into all parts of the grounds.

In one quarter was an aviary, filled with numerous kinds of birds, remarkable in this region both for brilliancy of plumage and of song. The gardens were intersected by a canal communicating with the lake of Tezcuco, and of sufficient size for barges to enter from the latter. But the most elaborate piece of work was a huge reservoir of stone, filled to a considerable height with water well supplied with different sorts of fish. This basin was sixteen hundred paces in circumference, and was surrounded by a walk, made also of stone, wide enough for four persons to go abreast. The sides were curiously sculptured, and a flight of steps led to the water below, which fed the aqueducts above noticed, or, collected into fountains, diffused a perpetual moisture.

Such are the accounts transmitted of these celebrated gardens, at a period when similar horticultural establish-

ments were unknown in Europe;[30] and we might well doubt their existence in this semi-civilized land, were it not a matter of such notoriety at the time and so explicitly attested by the invaders. But a generation had scarcely passed after the Conquest, before a sad change came over these scenes so beautiful. The town itself was deserted, and the shore of the lake was strewed with the wreck of buildings which once were its ornament and its glory. The gardens shared the fate of the city. The retreating waters withdrew the means of nourishment, converting the flourishing plains into a foul and unsightly morass, the haunt of loathsome reptiles; and the water-fowl built her nest in what had once been the palaces of princes![31]

In the city of Iztapalapan, Cortés took up his quarters for the night. We may imagine what a crowd of ideas must have pressed on the mind of the Conqueror, as, surrounded by these evidences of civilization, he prepared with his handful of followers to enter the capital of a monarch who, as he had abundant reason to know, regarded him with distrust and aversion. This capital was now but a few miles distant, distinctly visible from Iztapalapan. And as its long lines of glittering edifices, struck by the rays of the evening sun, trembled on the dark-blue waters of the lake, it looked like a thing of fairy creation, rather than the work of mortal hands.

[30] The earliest instance of a Garden of Plants in Europe is said to have been at Padua, in 1545. Carli, Lettres Américaines, tom. i. let. 21.

[31] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ub. supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 44.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 13.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Bernal Diaz Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 87.

Into this city of enchantment Cortés prepared to make his entry on the following morning.[32]

[32] "There Aztlan stood upon the farther shore;
Amid the shade of trees its dwellings rose,
Their level roofs with turrets set around,
And battlements all burnished white, which shone
Like silver in the sunshine. I beheld
The imperial city, her far-circling walls,
Her garden groves and stately palaces,
Her temples mountain size, her thousand roofs;
And when I saw her might and majesty,
My mind misgave me then."
SOUTHEY'S Madoc, Part 1, canto 6.

CHAPTER IX.

ENVIRONS OF MEXICO.—INTERVIEW WITH MONTEZUMA.—ENTRANCE INTO THE CAPITAL.—HOSPITABLE RECEPTION.—VISIT TO THE EMPEROR.

1519.

WITH the first faint streak of dawn, the Spanish general was up, mustering his followers. They gathered, with beating hearts, under their respective banners, as the trumpet sent forth its spirit-stirring sounds across water and woodland, till they died away in distant echoes among the mountains. The sacred flames on the altars of numberless *teocallis*, dimly seen through the gray mists of morning,[1] indicated the site of the capital, till temple, tower, and palace were fully revealed in the glorious illumination which the sun, as he rose above the eastern barrier, poured over the beautiful Valley. It was the eighth of November, 1519; a conspicuous day in history, as that on which the Europeans first set foot in the capital of the Western World.

[1] [Alaman objects to my speaking of the "gray mists of morning" in connection with the Aztec capital. "In the beginning of November," he says, "there is no such thing as a mist to be seen in the morning, or indeed in any part of the day, in the Valley of Mexico, where the weather is uncommonly bright and beautiful. The historian," he adds, "has confounded the climate of Mexico with that of England or the United States." Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 337.]

Cortés with his little body of horse formed a sort of advanced guard to the army. Then came the Spanish infantry, who in a summer's campaign had acquired the discipline and the weather-beaten aspect of veterans. The baggage occupied the centre; and the rear was closed by the dark files[2] of Tlascalan warriors. The whole number must have fallen short of seven thousand; of which less than four hundred were Spaniards.[3]

For a short distance, the army kept along the narrow tongue of land that divides the Tezcucan from the Chalcan waters, when it entered on the great dike, which, with the exception of an angle near the commencement, stretches in a perfectly straight line across the salt floods of Tezcuco to the gates of the capital. It was the same causeway, or rather the basis of that, which still forms the great southern avenue of Mexico.[4]

[2] [A Spanish translator incorrectly renders the words "dark files" by *indisciplinadas filas*, "undisciplined files." Señor Alaman, correcting, in this instance at least, the translation instead of the original, objects to this language. We may talk, says the critic, of the different kind of discipline peculiar to the Tlascalans, but not of their want of discipline, a defect which can hardly be charged on the most warlike nation of Anahuac. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 337.]

[3] He took about 6000 warriors from Tlascala; and some few of the Cempoallan and other Indian allies continued with him. The Spanish force on leaving Vera Cruz amounted to about 400 foot and 15 horse. In the remonstrance of the disaffected soldiers, after the murderous Tlascalan combats, they speak of having lost fifty of their number since the beginning of the campaign. *Ante*, vol. i. p. 449.

[4] "La calzada d'Iztapalapan est fondée sur cette même digue ancienne, sur laquelle Cortéz fit des prodiges de valeur dans ses rencontres avec les assiégés." (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 57.) [At present the road of Tlalplan, or St. Augustine of the Caves (San Augustin de las Cuevas). Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 338.]

The Spaniards had occasion more than ever to admire the mechanical science of the Aztecs, in the geometrical precision with which the work was executed, as well as the solidity of its construction. It was composed of huge stones well laid in cement, and wide enough, throughout its whole extent, for ten horsemen to ride abreast.

They saw, as they passed along, several large towns, resting on piles, and reaching far into the water,—a kind of architecture which found great favor with the Aztecs, being in imitation of that of their metropolis.[5] The busy population obtained a good subsistence from the manufacture of salt, which they extracted from the waters of the great lake. The duties on the traffic in this article were a considerable source of revenue to the crown.

Everywhere the Conquerors beheld the evidence of a crowded and thriving population, exceeding all they had yet seen. The temples and principal buildings of the cities were covered with a hard white stucco, which glistened like enamel in the level beams of the morning. The margin of the great basin was more thickly gemmed than that of Chalco with towns and hamlets.[6] The water was darkened by swarms of canoes filled

[5] Among these towns were several containing from three to five or six thousand dwellings, according to Cortés, whose barbarous orthography in proper names will not easily be recognized by Mexican or Spaniard. Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 78.

[6] Father Toribio Benavente does not stint his panegyric in speaking of the neighborhood of the capital, which he saw in its glory. "Creo, que en toda nuestra Europa hay pocas ciudades que tengan tal asiento y tal comarca, con tantos pueblos á la redonda de sí y tan bien asentados." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.

with Indians,[7] who clambered up the sides of the causeway and gazed with curious astonishment on the strangers. And here, also, they beheld those fairy islands of flowers, overshadowed occasionally by trees of considerable size, rising and falling with the gentle undulation of the billows. At the distance of half a league from the capital, they encountered a solid work or curtain of stone, which traversed the dike. It was twelve feet high, was strengthened by towers at the extremities, and in the centre was a battlemented gateway, which opened a passage to the troops. It was called the Fort of Xoloc, and became memorable in after-times as the position occupied by Cortés in the famous siege of Mexico.

Here they were met by several hundred Aztec chiefs, who came out to announce the approach of Montezuma and to welcome the Spaniards to his capital. They were dressed in the fanciful gala costume of the country, with the *maxtlatl*, or cotton sash, around their loins, and a broad mantle of the same material, or of the brilliant feather-embroidery, flowing gracefully down their shoulders. On their necks and arms they displayed collars and bracelets of turquoise mosaic, with which delicate plumage was curiously mingled,[8]

7 It is not necessary, however, to adopt Herrera's account of 50,000 canoes, which, he says, were constantly employed in supplying the capital with provisions! (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 14.) The poet-chronicler Saavedra is more modest in his estimate:

> "Dos mil y mas canoas cada dia
> Bastecen el gran pueblo Mexicano
> De la mas y la menos niñería
> Que es necesario al alimento humano."
>
> EL PEREGRINO INDIANO, canto 11.

8 "Usaban unos brazaletes de musaico, hechos de turquezas con

while their ears, under-lips, and occasionally their noses, were garnished with pendants formed of precious stones, or crescents of fine gold. As each cacique made the usual formal salutation of the country separately to the general, the tedious ceremony delayed the march more than an hour. After this, the army experienced no further interruption till it reached a bridge near the gates of the city. It was built of wood, since replaced by one of stone, and was thrown across an opening of the dike, which furnished an outlet to the waters when agitated by the winds or swollen by a sudden influx in the rainy season. It was a drawbridge; and the Spaniards, as they crossed it, felt how truly they were committing themselves to the mercy of Montezuma, who, by thus cutting off their communications with the country, might hold them prisoners in his capital.[9]

In the midst of these unpleasant reflections, they beheld the glittering retinue of the emperor emerging from the great street which led then, as it still does, through the heart of the city.[10] Amidst a crowd of

unas plumas ricas que salian de ellos, que eran mas altas que la cabeza, y bordadas con plumas ricas y con oro, y unas bandas de oro, que subian con las plumas." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 9.

[9] Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte 1, cap. 24.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 65.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 78, 79.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

[10] Cardinal Lorenzana says, the street intended was, probably, that crossing the city from the Hospital of San Antonio. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, p. 79, nota.) This is confirmed by Sahagun. "Y así en aquel trecho que está desde la Iglesia de San Antonio (que ellos llaman Xuluco) que va por cave las casas de Alvarado, hácia el Hospital de

Indian nobles, preceded by three officers of state bearing golden wands,[11] they saw the royal palanquin blazing with burnished gold. It was borne on the shoulders of nobles, and over it a canopy of gaudy feather-work, powdered with jewels and fringed with silver, was supported by four attendants of the same rank. They were bare-footed, and walked with a slow, measured pace, and with eyes bent on the ground. When the train had come within a convenient distance, it halted, and Montezuma, descending from his litter, came forward, leaning on the arms of the lords of Tezcuco and Iztapalapan, his nephew and brother, both of whom, as we have seen, had already been made known to the Spaniards. As the monarch advanced under the canopy, the obsequious attendants strewed the ground with cotton tapestry, that his imperial feet might not be contaminated by the rude soil. His subjects of high and low degree, who lined the sides of the causeway, bent forward with their eyes fastened on the ground as he passed, and some of the humbler class prostrated themselves before him.[12] Such

la Concepcion, salió Moctezuma á recibir de paz á D. Hernando Cortés." Hist de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 16. [The present Calle del Rastro, which continues, under different names, from the guard-house of San Antonio Abad to the Plaza. According to an early tradition, Montezuma and Cortés met in front of the spot where the Hospital of Jesus now stands, and the site for the building was chosen on that account. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 339.]

[11] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.

[12] "Toda la gente que estaba en las calles se le humiliaban y hacian profunda reverencia y grande acatamiento sin levantar los ojos á le mirar, sino que todos estaban hasta que él era pasado, *tan inclinados como frayles en Gloria Patri.*" Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.

was the homage paid to the Indian despot, showing that the slavish forms of Oriental adulation were to be found among the rude inhabitants of the Western World.

Montezuma wore the girdle and ample square cloak, *tilmatli*, of his nation. It was made of the finest cotton, with the embroidered ends gathered in a knot round his neck. His feet were defended by sandals having soles of gold, and the leathern thongs which bound them to his ankles were embossed with the same metal. Both the cloak and sandals were sprinkled with pearls and precious stones, among which the emerald and the *chalchivitl*—a green stone of higher estimation than any other among the Aztecs—were conspicuous. On his head he wore no other ornament than a *panache* of plumes of the royal green, which floated down his back, the badge of military, rather than of regal, rank.

He was at this time about forty years of age. His person was tall and thin, but not ill made. His hair, which was black and straight, was not very long; to wear it short was considered unbecoming persons of rank. His beard was thin; his complexion somewhat paler than is often found in his dusky, or rather copper-colored, race. His features, though serious in their expression, did not wear the look of melancholy, indeed, of dejection, which characterizes his portrait, and which may well have settled on them at a later period. He moved with dignity, and his whole demeanor, tempered by an expression of benignity not to have been anticipated from the reports circulated of his character, was worthy of a great prince. Such is

the portrait left to us of the celebrated Indian emperor in this his first interview with the white men.[13]

The army halted as he drew near. Cortés, dismounting, threw his reins to a page, and, supported by a few of the principal cavaliers, advanced to meet him. The interview must have been one of uncommon interest to both. In Montezuma, Cortés beheld the lord of the broad realms he had traversed, whose magnificence and power had been the burden of every tongue. In the Spaniard, on the other hand, the Aztec prince saw the strange being whose history seemed to be so mysteriously connected with his own; the predicted one of his oracles; whose achievements proclaimed him something more than human. But, whatever may have been the monarch's feelings, he so far suppressed them as to receive his guest with princely courtesy, and to express his satisfaction at personally

[13] For the preceding account of the equipage and appearance of Montezuma, see Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88,—Carta de Zuazo, MS.,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 65,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra, et cap. 45,—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 22,—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 16,—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—The noble Castilian or rather Mexican bard, Saavedra, who belonged to the generation after the Conquest, has introduced most of the particulars in his rhyming chronicle. The following specimen will probably suffice for the reader:

"Yva el gran Moteçuma atauiado
De manta açul y blanca con gran falda,
De algodon muy sutil y delicado,
Y al remate vna concha de esmeralda:
En la parte que el nudo tiene dado,
Y una tiara á modo de guirnalda,
Zapatos que de oro son las suelas
Asidos con muy ricas correhuelas."

EL PEREGRINO INDIANO, canto 11.

seeing him in his capital.[14] Cortés responded by the most profound expressions of respect, while he made ample acknowledgments for the substantial proofs which the emperor had given the Spaniards of his munificence. He then hung round Montezuma's neck a sparkling chain of colored crystal, accompanying this with a movement as if to embrace him, when he was restrained by the two Aztec lords, shocked at the menaced profanation of the sacred person of their master.[15] After the interchange of these civilities, Montezuma appointed his brother to conduct the Spaniards to their residence in the capital, and, again entering his litter, was borne off amidst prostrate crowds in the same state in which he had come. The Spaniards quickly followed, and, with colors flying and music playing, soon made their entrance into the southern quarter of Tenochtitlan.[16]

Here, again, they found fresh cause for admiration in the grandeur of the city and the superior style of its architecture. The dwellings of the poorer class were, indeed, chiefly of reeds and mud. But the great avenue through which they were now marching was lined with the houses of the nobles, who were encouraged by the emperor to make the capital their residence. They were built of a red porous stone drawn from quarries in the neighborhood, and, though they rarely

[14] "Satis vultu læto," says Martyr, "an stomacho sedatus, et an hospites per vim quis unquam libens susceperit, experti loquantur." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

[15] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 79.

[16] "Entráron en la ciudad de Méjico á punto de guerra, tocando los atambores, y con banderas desplegadas," etc. Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 15.

rose to a second story, often covered a large space of ground. The flat roofs, *azoteas*, were protected by stone parapets, so that every house was a fortress. Sometimes these roofs resembled parterres of flowers, so thickly were they covered with them, but more frequently these were cultivated in broad terraced gardens, laid out between the edifices.[17] Occasionally a great square or market-place intervened, surrounded by its porticoes of stone and stucco; or a pyramidal temple reared its colossal bulk, crowned with its tapering sanctuaries, and altars blazing with inextinguishable fires. The great street facing the southern causeway, unlike most others in the place, was wide, and extended some miles in nearly a straight line, as before noticed, through the centre of the city. A spectator standing at one end of it, as his eye ranged along the deep vista of temples, terraces, and gardens, might clearly discern the other, with the blue mountains in the distance, which, in the transparent atmosphere of the table-land, seemed almost in contact with the buildings.

But what most impressed the Spaniards was the throngs of people who swarmed through the streets and on the canals, filling every door-way and window and clustering on the roofs of the buildings. "I well remember the spectacle," exclaims Bernal Diaz: "it seems now, after so many years, as present to my mind as if it were but yesterday."[18] But what must have

[17] "Et giardini alti et bassi, che era cosa maravigliosa da vedere." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[18] "¿Quien podrá," exclaims the old soldier, "dezir la multitud de hombres, y mugeres, y muchachos, que estauan en las calles, é açu-

been the sensations of the Aztecs themselves, as they looked on the portentous pageant! as they heard, now for the first time, the well-cemented pavement ring under the iron tramp of the horses,—the strange animals which fear had clothed in such supernatural terrors; as they gazed on the children of the East, revealing their celestial origin in their fair complexions; saw the bright falchions and bonnets of steel, a metal to them unknown, glancing like meteors in the sun, while sounds of unearthly music—at least, such as their rude instruments had never wakened—floated in the air! But every other emotion was lost in that of deadly hatred, when they beheld their detested enemy the Tlascalan stalking, in defiance, as it were, through their streets, and staring around with looks of ferocity and wonder, like some wild animal of the forest who had strayed by chance from his native fastnesses into the haunts of civilization.[19]

As they passed down the spacious street, the troops repeatedly traversed bridges suspended above canals, along which they saw the Indian barks gliding swiftly with their little cargoes of fruits and vegetables for the markets of Tenochtitlan.[20] At length they halted

teas, y en Canoas en aquellas acequias, que nos salian á mirar? Era cosa de notar, que agora que lo estoy escriuiendo, se me representa todo delante de mis ojos, como si ayer fuera quando esto passó." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.

[19] "Ad spectaculum," says the penetrating Martyr, "tandem Hispanis placidum, quia diu optatum, Tenustiatanis prudentibus forte aliter, quia verentur fore, vt hi hospites quietem suam Elysiam veniant perturbaturi; de populo secus, qui nil sentit æque delectabile, quàm res novas ante oculos in presentiarum habere, de futuro nihil anxius." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

[20] The euphonious name of *Tenochtitlan* is commonly derived from

before a broad area near the centre of the city, where rose the huge pyramidal pile dedicated to the patron war-god of the Aztecs, second only, in size as well as sanctity, to the temple of Cholula, and covering the same ground now in part occupied by the great cathedral of Mexico.[21]

Facing the western gate of the enclosure of the temple, stood a low range of stone buildings, spreading over a wide extent of ground, the palace of Axayacatl, Montezuma's father, built by that monarch about fifty years before.[22] It was appropriated as the barracks of the Spaniards. The emperor himself was in the court-yard, waiting to receive them. Approaching Cortés, he took from a vase of flowers, borne by one of his slaves, a massy collar, in which the shell of a species of craw-

Aztec words signifying "the *tuna*, or cactus, on a rock," the appearance of which, as the reader may remember, was to determine the site of the future capital. (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, Parte 3, cap. 7.—Esplic. de la Coleccion de Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. iv.) Another etymology derives the word from *Tenoch*, the name of one of the founders of the monarchy.

[21] ["Por algunos manuscritos que he consultado é investigaciones que he hecho, me inclino á creer, que el templo se estendia desde la esquina de la calle de *Plateros* y *Empedradillo* hasta la de *Cordobanes;* y de P. á O., desde el tercio ó cuarto de la placeta del *Empedradillo*, hasta penetrar unas cuantas varas hácia el O., dentro de las aceras que miran al P., y forman las calles del *Seminario* y del *Relox*. Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 103.]

[22] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 78.—It occupied what is now the corner of the streets "Del Indio Triste" and "Tacuba."* Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 7, et seq.

* [Consequently, says Alaman, it must have faced the east, not the west gate of the Temple. Conquista de Méjico, tom. i. p. 343. —Ed.]

fish, much prized by the Indians, was set in gold and connected by heavy links of the same metal. From this chain depended eight ornaments, also of gold, made in resemblance of the same shell-fish, a span in length each, and of delicate workmanship;[23] for the Aztec goldsmiths were confessed to have shown skill in their craft not inferior to their brethren of Europe.[24] Montezuma, as he hung the gorgeous collar round the general's neck, said, "This palace belongs to you, Malinche"[25] (the epithet by which he always addressed him), "and your brethren. Rest after your fatigues, for you have much need to do so, and in a little while I will visit you again." So saying, he withdrew with his attendants, evincing in this act a delicate consideration not to have been expected in a barbarian.

Cortés' first care was to inspect his new quarters. The building, though spacious, was low, consisting of one floor, except, indeed, in the centre, where it rose to an additional story. The apartments were of great size, and afforded accommodations, according to the testimony of the Conquerors themselves, for the whole

[23] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 88.—Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte 1, cap. 24.

[24] Boturini says, greater, by the acknowledgment of the goldsmiths themselves. "Los plateros de Madrid, viendo algunas Piezas, y Brazaletes de oro, con que se armaban en guerra los Reyes, y Capitanes Indianos, confessáron, que eran inimitables en Europa." (Idea, p. 78.) And Oviedo, speaking of their work in jewelry, remarks, "Io ví algunas piedras jaspes, calcidonias, jacintos, corniolas, é plasmas de esmeraldas, é otras de otras especies labradas é fechas, cabezas de Aves, é otras hechas animales é otras figuras, que dudo haber en España ni en Italia quien las supiera hacer con tanta perficion." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11.

[25] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 472.

army![26] The hardy mountaineers of Tlascala were, probably, not very fastidious, and might easily find a shelter in the out-buildings, or under temporary awnings in the ample court-yards. The best apartments were hung with gay cotton draperies, the floors covered with mats or rushes. There were, also, low stools made of single pieces of wood elaborately carved, and in most of the apartments beds made of the palm-leaf, woven into a thick mat, with coverlets, and sometimes canopies, of cotton. These mats were the only beds used by the natives, whether of high or low degree.[27]

After a rapid survey of this gigantic pile, the general assigned his troops their respective quarters, and took as vigilant precautions for security as if he had anticipated a siege instead of a friendly entertainment. The place was encompassed by a stone wall of considerable thickness, with towers or heavy buttresses at intervals, affording a good means of defence. He planted his cannon so as to command the approaches, stationed his sentinels along the works, and, in short, enforced in every respect as strict military discipline as had been observed in any part of the march. He well knew the importance to his little band, at least for the present, of conciliating the good will of the citizens; and, to avoid all possibility of collision, he prohibited any soldier from leaving his quarters without orders, under pain of death. Having taken these precautions, he

[26] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 80.

[27] Bernal Diaz, Ibid., loc. cit.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 16.

allowed his men to partake of the bountiful collation which had been prepared for them.

They had been long enough in the country to become reconciled to, if not to relish, the peculiar cooking of the Aztecs. The appetite of the soldier is not often dainty, and on the present occasion it cannot be doubted that the Spaniards did full justice to the savory productions of the royal kitchen. During the meal they were served by numerous Mexican slaves, who were, indeed, distributed through the palace, anxious to do the bidding of the strangers. After the repast was concluded, and they had taken their *siesta*, not less important to a Spaniard than food itself, the presence of the emperor was again announced.

Montezuma was attended by a few of his principal nobles. He was received with much deference by Cortés; and, after the parties had taken their seats, a conversation commenced between them, through the aid of Doña Marina, while the cavaliers and Aztec chieftains stood around in respectful silence.

Montezuma made many inquiries concerning the country of the Spaniards, their sovereign, the nature of his government, and especially their own motives in visiting Anahuac. Cortés explained these motives by the desire to see so distinguished a monarch and to declare to him the true Faith professed by the Christians. With rare discretion, he contented himself with dropping this hint, for the present, allowing it to ripen in the mind of the emperor, till a future conference. The latter asked whether those white men who in the preceding year had landed on the eastern shores of his empire were their countrymen. He showed himself

well informed of the proceedings of the Spaniards from their arrival in Tabasco to the present time, information of which had been regularly transmitted in the hieroglyphical paintings. He was curious, also, in regard to the rank of his visitors in their own country; inquiring if they were the kinsmen of the sovereign. Cortés replied, they were kinsmen of one another, and subjects of their great monarch, who held them all in peculiar estimation. Before his departure, Montezuma made himself acquainted with the names of the principal cavaliers, and the position they occupied in the army.

At the conclusion of the interview, the Aztec prince commanded his attendants to bring forward the presents prepared for his guests. They consisted of cotton dresses, enough to supply every man, it is said, including the allies, with a suit![28] And he did not fail to add the usual accompaniment of gold chains and other ornaments, which he distributed in profusion among the Spaniards. He then withdrew with the same ceremony with which he had entered, leaving every one deeply impressed with his munificence and his affability, so unlike what they had been taught to

[28] "Muchas y diversas Joyas de Oro, y Plata, y Plumajes, y con fasta cinco ó seis mil Piezas de Ropa de Algodon muy ricas, y de diversas maneras texida, y labrada." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 80.) Even this falls short of truth, according to Diaz. "Tenia apercebido el gran Monteçuma muy ricas joyas de oro, y de muchas hechuras, que dió á nuestro Capitan, é assí mismo á cada vno de nuestros Capitanes dió cositas de oro, y tres cargas de mantas de labores ricas de pluma, y entre todos los soldados tambien nos dió á cada vno á dos cargas de mantas, con alegría, y en todo parecia gran señor." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 89.) "Sex millia vestium, aiunt qui eas vidêre." Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

expect by what they now considered an invention of the enemy.[29]

That evening the Spaniards celebrated their arrival in the Mexican capital by a general discharge of artillery. The thunders of the ordnance, reverberating among the buildings and shaking them to their foundations, the stench of the sulphureous vapor that rolled in volumes above the walls of the encampment, reminding the inhabitants of the explosions of the great *volcan*, filled the hearts of the superstitious Aztecs with dismay. It proclaimed to them that their city held in its bosom those dread beings whose path had been marked with desolation, and who could call down the thunderbolts to consume their enemies! It was doubtless the policy of Cortés to strengthen this superstitious feeling as far as possible, and to impress the natives, at the outset, with a salutary awe of the supernatural powers of the Spaniards.[30]

On the following morning, the general requested permission to return the emperor's visit, by waiting on him in his palace. This was readily granted, and Montezuma sent his officers to conduct the Spaniards to his presence. Cortés dressed himself in his richest habit, and left the quarters attended by Alvarado,

[29] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 66.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 6.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 88.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.

[30] "La noche siguiente jugáron la artillería por la solemnidad de haber llegado sin daño á donde deseaban; pero los Indios como no usados á los truenos de la artillería, mal edor de la pólvora, recibiéron grande alteracion y miedo toda aquella noche." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 17.

Sandoval, Velasquez, and Ordaz, together with five or six of the common file.

The royal habitation was at no great distance. It stood on the ground, to the southwest of the cathedral, since covered in part by the *Casa del Estado*, the palace of the dukes of Monteleone, the descendants of Cortés.[31] It was a vast, irregular pile of low stone buildings, like that garrisoned by the Spaniards.[32] So spacious was it, indeed, that, as one of the Conquerors assures us, although he had visited it more than once, for the express purpose, he had been too much fatigued each time by wandering through the apartments ever to see the whole of it.[33] It was built of the red porous stone of the country, *tetzontli*, was ornamented with marble, and on the façade over the principal entrance were sculptured the arms or device of Montezuma, an eagle bearing an ocelot in his talons.[34]

[31] "C'est là que la famille construisit le bel édifice dans lequel se trouvent les archives del Estado, et qui est passé avec tout l'héritage au duc Napolitain de Monteleone." (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 72.) The inhabitants of modern Mexico have large obligations to this inquisitive traveller for the care he has taken to identify the memorable localities of their capital. It is not often that a philosophical treatise is also a good *manuel du voyageur*.

[32] [The palace of Montezuma, according to Ramirez, "occupied the site where the national palace now stands, including that of the university and the adjacent houses, and extending to the Plaza del Volador, or new market-place. This was the ordinary residence of the last Montezuma, and the place where he was actually made prisoner." Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 103.]

[33] "Et io entrai più di quattro volte in una casa del gran Signor non per altro effetto che per vederla, et ogni volta vi camminauo tanto che mi stancauo, et mai la fini di vedere tutta." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[34] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 71.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7,

In the courts through which the Spaniards passed, fountains of crystal water were playing, fed from the copious reservoir on the distant hill of Chapoltepec, and supplying in their turn more than a hundred baths in the interior of the palace. Crowds of Aztec nobles were sauntering up and down in these squares, and in the outer halls, loitering away their hours in attendance on the court. The apartments were of immense size, though not lofty. The ceilings were of various sorts of odoriferous wood ingeniously carved; the floors covered with mats of the palm-leaf. The walls were hung with cotton richly stained, with the skins of wild animals, or gorgeous draperies of feather-work wrought in imitation of birds, insects, and flowers, with the nice art and glowing radiance of colors that might compare with the tapestries of Flanders. Clouds of incense rolled up from censers and diffused intoxicating odors through the apartments. The Spaniards might well have fancied themselves in the voluptuous precincts of an Eastern harem, instead of treading the halls of a wild barbaric chief in the Western World.[35]

On reaching the hall of audience, the Mexican officers took off their sandals, and covered their gay attire with a mantle of *nequen*, a coarse stuff made of the fibres of the maguey, worn only by the poorest classes.

cap. 9.—The authorities call it "tiger," an animal not known in America. I have ventured to substitute the "ocelot," *tlalocelotl* of Mexico, a native animal, which, being of the same family, might easily be confounded by the Spaniards with the tiger of the Old Continent.

[35] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 9.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 71.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5, 46.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 111–114.

This act of humiliation was imposed on all, except the members of his own family, who approached the sovereign.[36] Thus bare-footed, with downcast eyes and formal obeisance, they ushered the Spaniards into the royal presence.

They found Montezuma seated at the further end of a spacious saloon and surrounded by a few of his favorite chiefs. He received them kindly, and very soon Cortés, without much ceremony, entered on the subject which was uppermost in his thoughts. He was fully aware of the importance of gaining the royal convert, whose example would have such an influence on the conversion of his people. The general, therefore, prepared to display the whole store of his theological science, with the most winning arts of rhetoric he could command, while the interpretation was conveyed through the silver tones of Marina, as inseparable from him, on these occasions, as his shadow.

He set forth, as clearly as he could, the ideas entertained by the Church in regard to the holy mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. From this he ascended to the origin of things, the creation of the world, the first pair, paradise, and the fall of man. He assured Montezuma that the idols he worshipped were Satan under different forms. A suffi-

[36] "Para entrar en su palacio, á que ellos llaman Tecpa, todos se descalzaban, y los que entraban á negociar con él habian de llevar mantas groseras encima de si, y si eran grandes señores ó en tiempo de frio, sobre las mantas buenas que llevaban vestidas, ponian una manta grosera y pobre; y para hablarle, estaban muy humiliados y sin levantar los ojos." (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.) There is no better authority than this worthy missionary for the usages of the ancient Aztecs, of which he had such large personal knowledge.

cient proof of it was the bloody sacrifices they imposed, which he contrasted with the pure and simple rite of the mass. Their worship would sink him in perdition. It was to snatch his soul, and the souls of his people, from the flames of eternal fire by opening to them a purer faith, that the Christians had come to his land. And he earnestly besought him not to neglect the occasion, but to secure his salvation by embracing the Cross, the great sign of human redemption.

The eloquence of the preacher was wasted on the insensible heart of his royal auditor. It doubtless lost somewhat of its efficacy, strained through the imperfect interpretation of so recent a neophyte as the Indian damsel. But the doctrines were too abstruse in themselves to be comprehended at a glance by the rude intellect of a barbarian. And Montezuma may have, perhaps, thought it was not more monstrous to feed on the flesh of a fellow-creature than on that of the Creator himself.[37] He was, besides, steeped in the superstitions of his country from his cradle. He had been educated in the straitest sect of her religion, had been himself a priest before his election to the throne, and was now the head both of the religion and the state. Little probability was there that such a man would be open to argument or persuasion, even from the lips of a more practised polemic than the Spanish commander. How could he abjure the faith that was intertwined with the dearest affections of his heart and the very

[37] The ludicrous effect—if the subject be not too grave to justify the expression—of a literal belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation in the mother-country, even at this day, is well illustrated by Blanco White, Letters from Spain (London, 1822), let. 1.

elements of his being? How could he be false to the gods who had raised him to such prosperity and honors, and whose shrines were intrusted to his especial keeping?

He listened, however, with silent attention, until the general had concluded his homily. He then replied that he knew the Spaniards had held this discourse wherever they had been. He doubted not their God was, as they said, a good being. His gods, also, were good to him. Yet what his visitor said of the creation of the world was like what he had been taught to believe.[38] It was not worth while to discourse further of the matter. His ancestors, he said, were not the original proprietors of the land. They had occupied it but a few ages, and had been led there by a great Being, who, after giving them laws and ruling over the nation for a time, had withdrawn to the regions where the sun rises. He had declared, on his departure, that he or his descendants would again visit them and resume his empire.[39] The wonderful deeds of the Spaniards, their fair complexions, and the quarter whence they came, all showed they were his descendants. If Montezuma had resisted their visit to his capital, it was because he had heard such accounts of their cruelties,—that they sent the lightning to consume his

[38] "Y en esso de la creacion del mundo assí lo tenemos nosotros creido muchos tiempos passados." (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 90.) For some points of resemblance between the Aztec and Hebrew traditions, see Book 1, chap. 3, and Appendix, Part 1, of this History.

[39] "É siempre hemos tenido, que de los que de él descendiessen habian de venir á sojuzgar esta tierra, y á nosotros como á sus Vasallos." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 81.

people, or crushed them to pieces under the hard feet of the ferocious animals on which they rode. He was now convinced that these were idle tales; that the Spaniards were kind and generous in their natures; they were mortals, of a different race, indeed, from the Aztecs, wiser, and more valiant,—and for this he honored them.

"You, too," he added, with a smile, "have been told, perhaps, that I am a god, and dwell in palaces of gold and silver.[40] But you see it is false. My houses, though large, are of stone and wood like those of others; and as to my body," he said, baring his tawny arm, "you see it is flesh and bone like yours. It is true, I have a great empire inherited from my ancestors; lands, and gold, and silver. But your sovereign beyond the waters is, I know, the rightful lord of all. I rule in his name. You, Malinche, are his ambassador; you and your brethren shall share these things with me. Rest now from your labors. You are here in your own dwellings, and everything shall be provided for your subsistence. I will see that your wishes shall be obeyed in the same way as my own."[41] As the

[40] "Y luego el Monteçuma dixo riendo, porque en todo era muy regozijado en su hablar de gran señor: Malinche, bien sé que te han dicho essos de Tlascala, con quien tanta amistad aueis tomado, que yo que soy como Dios, ó Teule, que quanto ay en mis casas es todo oro, é plata, y piedras ricas." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 90.

[41] "É por tanto Vos sed cierto, que os obedecerémos, y ternémos por señor en lugar de esse gran señor, que decis, y que en ello no habia falta, ni engaño alguno; é bien podeis en toda la tierra, digo, que en la que yo en mi Señorío poseo, mandar á vuestra voluntad, porque será obedecido y fecho, y todo lo que nosotros tenemos es para lo que Vos de ello quisieredes disponer." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.

monarch concluded these words, a few natural tears suffused his eyes, while the image of ancient independence, perhaps, flitted across his mind.[42]

Cortés, while he encouraged the idea that his own sovereign was the great Being indicated by Montezuma, endeavored to comfort the monarch by the assurance that his master had no desire to interfere with his authority, otherwise than, out of pure concern for his welfare, to effect his conversion and that of his people to Christianity. Before the emperor dismissed his visitors he consulted his munificent spirit, as usual, by distributing rich stuffs and trinkets of gold among them, so that the poorest soldier, says Bernal Diaz, one of the party, received at least two heavy collars of the precious metal for his share. The iron hearts of the Spaniards were touched with the emotion displayed by Montezuma, as well as by his princely spirit of liberality. As they passed him, the cavaliers, with bonnet in hand, made him the most profound obeisance, and "on the way home," continues the same chronicler, "we could discourse of nothing but the gentle breeding and courtesy of the Indian monarch, and of the respect we entertained for him."[43]

[42] Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 66.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Gonzalo de las Casas, MS., Parte 1, cap. 24.—Cortés, in his brief notes of this proceeding, speaks only of the interview with Montezuma in the Spanish quarters, which he makes the scene of the preceding dialogue. Bernal Diaz transfers this to the subsequent meeting in the palace. In the only fact of importance, the dialogue itself, both substantially agree.

[43] "Assí nos despedímos con grandes cortesías dél, y nos fuýmos á nuestros aposentos, é ibamos platicando de la buena manera é criança que en todo tenia, é que nosotros en todo le tuuiessemos mucho

Speculations of a graver complexion must have pressed on the mind of the general, as he saw around him the evidences of a civilization, and consequently power, for which even the exaggerated reports of the natives—discredited from their apparent exaggeration—had not prepared him. In the pomp and burdensome ceremonial of the court he saw that nice system of subordination and profound reverence for the monarch which characterize the semi-civilized empires of Asia. In the appearance of the capital, its massy yet elegant architecture, its luxurious social accommodations, its activity in trade, he recognized the proofs of the intellectual progress, mechanical skill, and enlarged resources of an old and opulent community; while the swarms in the streets attested the existence of a population capable of turning these resources to the best account.

In the Aztec he beheld a being unlike either the rude republican Tlascalan or the effeminate Cholulan, but combining the courage of the one with the cultivation of the other. He was in the heart of a great capital, which seemed like an extensive fortification, with its dikes and its draw-bridges, where every house might be easily converted into a castle. Its insular position removed it from the continent, from which, at the mere nod of the sovereign, all communication might be cut off, and the whole warlike population be at once precipitated on him and his handful of followers. What could superior science avail against such odds?[44]

acato, é con las gorras de armas colchadas quitadas, quando delante dél passassemos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 90.

[44] "Y assí," says Toribio de Benavente, "estaba tan fuerte esta

As to the subversion of Montezuma's empire, now that he had seen him in his capital, it must have seemed a more doubtful enterprise than ever. The recognition which the Aztec prince had made of the feudal supremacy, if I may so say, of the Spanish sovereign, was not to be taken too literally. Whatever show of deference he might be disposed to pay the latter under the influence of his present—perhaps temporary—delusion, it was not to be supposed that he would so easily relinquish his actual power and possessions, or that his people would consent to it. Indeed, his sensitive apprehensions in regard to this very subject, on the coming of the Spaniards, were sufficient proof of the tenacity with which he clung to his authority. It is true that Cortés had a strong lever for future operations in the superstitious reverence felt for himself both by prince and people. It was undoubtedly his policy to maintain this sentiment unimpaired in both, as far as possible.[45] But, before settling any plan of operations, it was necessary to make himself personally acquainted with the topography and local advantages of the capital, the character of its population, and the real nature and amount of its resources. With this view, he asked the emperor's permission to visit the principal public edifices.

ciudad, que parecia no bastar poder humano para ganarla; porque ademas de su fuerza y municion que tenia, era cabeza y Señoría de toda la tierra, y el Señor de ella (Moteczuma) gloriábase en su silla y en la fortaleza de su ciudad, y en la muchedumbre de sus vassallos." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.

[45] "Many are of opinion," says Father Acosta, "that, if the Spaniards had continued the course they began, they might easily have disposed of Montezuma and his kingdom, and introduced the law of Christ, without much bloodshed." Lib. 7, cap. 25.

Antonio de Herrera, the celebrated chronicler of the Indies, was born of a respectable family at Cuella, in Old Spain, in 1549. After passing through the usual course of academic discipline in his own country, he went to Italy, to which land of art and letters the Spanish youth of that time frequently resorted to complete their education. He there became acquainted with Vespasian Gonzaga, brother of the duke of Mantua, and entered into his service. He continued with this prince after he was made Viceroy of Navarre, and was so highly regarded by him, that, on his death-bed, Gonzaga earnestly commended him to the protection of Philip the Second. This penetrating monarch soon discerned the excellent qualities of Herrera, and raised him to the post of Historiographer of the Indies,—an office for which Spain is indebted to Philip. Thus provided with a liberal salary, and with every facility for pursuing the historical researches to which his inclination led him, Herrera's days glided peacefully away in the steady, but silent, occupations of a man of letters. He continued to hold the office of historian of the colonies through Philip the Second's reign, and under his successors, Philip the Third and the Fourth; till in 1625 he died at the advanced age of seventy-six, leaving behind him a high character for intellectual and moral worth.

Herrera wrote several works, chiefly historical. The most important, that on which his reputation rests, is his *Historia general de las Indias occidentales*. It extends from the year 1492, the time of the discovery of America, to 1554, and is divided into eight decades. Four of them were published in 1601, and the remaining four in 1615, making in all five volumes in folio. The work was subsequently republished in 1730, and has been translated into most of the languages of Europe. The English translator, Stevens, has taken great liberties with his original, in the way of abridgment and omission, but the execution of his work is, on the whole, superior to that of most of the old English versions of the Castilian chroniclers.

Herrera's vast subject embraces the whole colonial empire of Spain in the New World. The work is thrown into the form of annals, and the multifarious occurrences in the distant regions of which he treats are all marshalled with exclusive reference to their chronology, and made to move together *pari passu*. By means of this tasteless arrangement the thread of interest is perpetually snapped, the reader is hurried from one scene to another, without the opportunity of completing his survey of any. His patience is exhausted and his mind perplexed with partial and scattered glimpses, instead of gathering new light as

he advances from the skilful development of a continuous and well-digested narrative. This is the great defect of a plan founded on a slavish adherence to chronology. The defect becomes more serious when the work, as in the present instance, is of vast compass and embraces a great variety of details having little relation to each other. In such a work we feel the superiority of a plan like that which Robertson has pursued in his "History of America," where every subject is allowed to occupy its own independent place, proportioned to its importance, and thus to make a distinct and individual impression on the reader.

Herrera's position gave him access to the official returns from the colonies, state papers, and whatever documents existed in the public offices for the illustration of the colonial history. Among these sources of information were some manuscripts, with which it is not now easy to meet; as, for example, the memorial of Alonso de Ojeda, one of the followers of Cortés, which has eluded my researches both in Spain and Mexico. Other writings, as those of Father Sahagun, of much importance in the history of Indian civilization, were unknown to the historian. Of such manuscripts as fell into his hands, Herrera made the freest use. From the writings of Las Casas, in particular, he borrowed without ceremony. The bishop had left orders that his "History of the Indies" should not be published till at least forty years after his death. Before that period had elapsed, Herrera had entered on his labors, and, as he had access to the papers of Las Casas, he availed himself of it to transfer whole pages, nay, chapters, of his narrative in the most unscrupulous manner to his own work. In doing this, he made a decided improvement on the manner of his original, reduced his cumbrous and entangled sentences to pure Castilian, omitted his turgid declamation and his unreasonable invectives. But, at the same time, he also excluded the passages that bore hardest on the conduct of his countrymen, and those bursts of indignant eloquence which showed a moral sensibility in the Bishop of Chiapa that raised him so far above his age. By this sort of metempsychosis, if one may so speak, by which the letter and not the spirit of the good missionary was transferred to Herrera's pages, he rendered the publication of Las Casas' history, in some measure, superfluous; and this circumstance has, no doubt, been one reason for its having been so long detained in manuscript.

Yet, with every allowance for the errors incident to rapid composition, and to the pedantic chronological system pursued by Herrera,

his work must be admitted to have extraordinary merit. It displays to the reader the whole progress of Spanish conquest and colonization in the New World for the first sixty years after the discovery. The individual actions of his complicated story, though unskilfully grouped together, are unfolded in a pure and simple style, well suited to the gravity of his subject. If at first sight he may seem rather too willing to magnify the merits of the early discoverers and to throw a veil over their excesses, it may be pardoned, as flowing, not from moral insensibility, but from the patriotic sentiment which made him desirous, as far as might be, to wipe away every stain from the escutcheon of his nation, in the proud period of her renown. It is natural that the Spaniard who dwells on this period should be too much dazzled by the display of her gigantic efforts, scrupulously to weigh their moral character, or the merits of the cause in which they were made. Yet Herrera's national partiality never makes him the apologist of crime; and, with the allowances fairly to be conceded, he may be entitled to the praise so often given him of integrity and candor.

It must not be forgotten that, in addition to the narrative of the early discoveries of the Spaniards, Herrera has brought together a vast quantity of information in respect to the institutions and usages of the Indian nations, collected from the most authentic sources. This gives his work a completeness beyond what is to be found in any other on the same subject. It is, indeed, a noble monument of sagacity and erudition; and the student of history, and still more the historical compiler, will find himself unable to advance a single step among the early colonial settlements of the New World without reference to the pages of Herrera.

Another writer on Mexico, frequently consulted in the course of the present narrative, is Toribio de Benavente, or *Motolinia*, as he is still more frequently called, from his Indian cognomen. He was one of the twelve Franciscan missionaries who, at the request of Cortés, were sent out to New Spain immediately after the Conquest, in 1523. Toribio's humble attire, naked feet, and, in short, the poverty-stricken aspect which belongs to his order, frequently drew from the natives the exclamation of *Motolinia*, or "poor man." It was the first Aztec word the signification of which the missionary learned, and he was so much pleased with it, as intimating his own condition, that he henceforth assumed it as his name. Toribio employed himself zealously with his brethren in the great object of their mission. He travelled on foot over various parts of Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Wherever he went, he spared no pains to wean the natives from thei. dark idolatry, and to pour into their minds the light of revelation. He showed even a tender regard for their temporal as well as spiritual wants, and Bernal Diaz testifies that he has known him to give away his own robe to clothe a destitute and suffering Indian. Yet this charitable friar, so meek and conscientious in the discharge of his Christian duties, was one of the fiercest opponents of Las Casas, and sent home a remonstrance against the Bishop of Chiapa, couched in terms the most opprobrious and sarcastic. It has led the bishop's biographer, Quintana, to suggest that the friar's threadbare robe may have covered somewhat of worldly pride and envy. It may be so. Yet it may also lead us to distrust the discretion of Las Casas himself, who could carry measures with so rude a hand as to provoke such unsparing animadversions from his fellow-laborers in the vineyard.

Toribio was made guardian of a Franciscan convent at Tezcuco. In this situation he continued active in good works, and at this place, and in his different pilgrimages, is stated to have baptized more than four hundred thousand natives. His efficacious piety was attested by various miracles. One of the most remarkable was when the Indians were suffering from great drought, which threatened to annihilate the approaching harvests. The good father recommended a solemn procession of the natives to the church of Santa Cruz, with prayers and a vigorous flagellation. The effect was soon visible in such copious rains as entirely relieved the people from their apprehensions, and in the end made the season uncommonly fruitful. The counterpart to this prodigy was afforded a few years later, while the country was laboring under excessive rains; when, by a similar remedy, the evil was checked, and a like propitious influence exerted on the season as before. The exhibition of such miracles greatly edified the people, says his biographer, and established them firmly in the Faith. Probably Toribio's exemplary life and conversation, so beautifully illustrating the principles which he taught, did quite as much for the good cause as his miracles.

Thus passing his days in the peaceful and pious avocations of the Christian missionary, the worthy ecclesiastic was at length called from the scene of his earthly pilgrimage, in what year is uncertain, but at an advanced age, for he survived all the little band of missionaries who had accompanied him to New Spain. He died in the convent of San Francisco at Mexico, and his panegyric is thus emphatically pronounced by Torquemada, a brother of his own order: "He was

a truly apostolic man, a great teacher of Christianity, beautiful in the ornament of every virtue, jealous of the glory of God, a friend of evangelical poverty, most true to the observance of his monastic rule, and zealous in the conversion of the heathen."

Father Toribio's long personal intercourse with the Mexicans, and the knowledge of their language, which he was at much pains to acquire, opened to him all the sources of information respecting them and their institutions, which existed at the time of the Conquest. The results he carefully digested in the work so often cited in these pages, the *Historia de los Indios de Nueva-España*, making a volume of manuscript in folio. It is divided into three parts. 1. The religion, rites, and sacrifices of the Aztecs. 2. Their conversion to Christianity, and their manner of celebrating the festivals of the Church. 3. The genius and character of the nation, their chronology and astrology, together with notices of the principal cities and the staple productions of the country. Notwithstanding the methodical arrangement of the work, it is written in the rambling, unconnected manner of a commonplace-book, into which the author has thrown at random his notices of such matters as most interested him in his survey of the country. His own mission is ever before his eyes, and the immediate topic of discussion, of whatever nature it may be, is at once abandoned to exhibit an event or an anecdote that can illustrate his ecclesiastical labors. The most startling occurrences are recorded with all the credulous gravity which is so likely to win credit from the vulgar; and a stock of miracles is duly attested by the historian, of more than sufficient magnitude to supply the wants of the infant religious communities of New Spain.

Yet amidst this mass of pious *incredibilia* the inquirer into the Aztec antiquities will find much curious and substantial information. Toribio's long and intimate relations with the natives put him in possession of their whole stock of theology and science; and as his manner, though somewhat discursive, is plain and unaffected, there is no obscurity in the communication of his ideas. His inferences, colored by the superstitions of the age and the peculiar nature of his profession, may be often received with distrust. But, as his integrity and his means of information were unquestionable, his work becomes of the first authority in relation to the antiquities of the country, and its condition at the period of the Conquest. As an educated man, he was enabled to penetrate deeper than the illiterate soldiers of Cortés, men given to action rather than to speculation. Yet Toribio's manuscript,

valuable as it is to the historian, has never been printed, and has too little in it of popular interest, probably, ever to be printed. Much that it contains has found its way, in various forms, into subsequent compilations. The work itself is very rarely to be found. Dr. Robertson had a copy, as it seems from the catalogue of MSS. published with his "History of America;" though the author's name is not prefixed to it. There is no copy, I believe, in the library of the Academy of History at Madrid; and for that in my possession I am indebted to the kindness of that curious bibliographer, Mr. O. Rich, now consul for the United States at Minorca.

Pietro Martire de Angleria, or Peter Martyr, as he is called by English writers, belonged to an ancient and highly respectable family of Arona in the north of Italy. In 1487 he was induced by the count of Tendilla, the Spanish ambassador at Rome, to return with him to Castile. He was graciously received by Queen Isabella, always desirous to draw around her enlightened foreigners, who might exercise a salutary influence on the rough and warlike nobility of Castile. Martyr, who had been educated for the Church, was persuaded by the queen to undertake the instruction of the young nobles at the court. In this way he formed an intimacy with some of the most illustrious men of the nation, who seem to have cherished a warm personal regard for him through the remainder of his life. He was employed by the Catholic sovereigns in various concerns of public interest, was sent on a mission to Egypt, and was subsequently raised to a distinguished post in the cathedral of Granada. But he continued to pass much of his time at court, where he enjoyed the confidence of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of their successor, Charles the Fifth, till in 1525 he died, at the age of seventy.

Martyr's character combined qualities not often found in the same individual,—an ardent love of letters, with a practical sagacity that can only result from familiarity with men and affairs. Though passing his days in the gay and dazzling society of the capital, he preserved the simple tastes and dignified temper of a philosopher. His correspondence, as well as his more elaborate writings, if the term elaborate can be applied to any of his writings, manifests an enlightened and oftentimes independent spirit; though one would have been better pleased had he been sufficiently independent to condemn the religious intolerance of the government. But Martyr, though a philosopher, was enough of a courtier to look with a lenient eye on the errors of princes. Though deeply imbued with the learning of antiquity, and

a scholar at heart, he had none of the feelings of the recluse, but took the most lively interest in the events that were passing around him. His various writings, including his copious correspondence, are for this reason the very best mirror of the age in which he lived.

His inquisitive mind was particularly interested by the discoveries that were going on in the New World. He was allowed to be present at the sittings of the Council of the Indies when any communication of importance was made to it; and he was subsequently appointed a member of that body. All that related to the colonies passed through his hands. The correspondence of Columbus, Cortés, and the other discoverers with the court of Castile was submitted to his perusal. He became personally acquainted with these illustrious persons on their return home, and frequently, as we find from his letters, entertained them at his own table. With these advantages, his testimony becomes but one degree removed from that of the actors themselves in the great drama. In one respect it is of a higher kind, since it is free from the prejudice and passion which a personal interest in events is apt to beget. The testimony of Martyr is that of a philosopher, taking a clear and comprehensive survey of the ground, with such lights of previous knowledge to guide him as none of the actual discoverers and conquerors could pretend to. It is true, this does not prevent his occasionally falling into errors; the errors of credulity,—not, however, of the credulity founded on superstition, but that which arises from the uncertain nature of the subject, where phenomena so unlike anything with which he had been familiar were now first disclosed by the revelation of an unknown world.

He may be more fairly charged with inaccuracies of another description, growing out of haste and inadvertence of composition. But even here we should be charitable. For he confesses his sins with a candor that disarms criticism. In truth, he wrote rapidly, and on the spur of the moment, as occasion served. He shrunk from the publication of his writings, when it was urged on him, and his Decades *De Orbe Novo*, in which he embodied the results of his researches in respect to the American discoveries, were not published entire till after his death. The most valuable and complete edition of this work—the one referred to in the present pages—is the edition of Hakluyt, published at Paris in 1587.

Martyr's works are all in Latin, and that not the purest; a circumstance rather singular, considering his familiarity with the classic models of antiquity. Yet he evidently handled the dead languages with the

same facility as the living. Whatever defects may be charged on his manner, in the selection and management of his topics he shows the superiority of his genius. He passes over the trivial details which so often encumber the literal narratives of the Spanish voyagers, and fixes his attention on the great results of their discoveries,—the products of the country, the history and institutions of the races, their character and advance in civilization. In one respect his writings are of peculiar value. They show the state of feeling which existed at the Castilian court during the progress of discovery. They furnish, in short, the reverse side of the picture; and, when we have followed the Spanish conquerors in their wonderful career of adventure in the New World, we have only to turn to the pages of Martyr to find the impression produced by them on the enlightened minds of the Old. Such a view is necessary to the completeness of the historical picture.

If the reader is curious to learn more of this estimable scholar, he will find the particulars given in "The History of Ferdinand and Isabella" (Part I. chap. 14, Postscript, and chap. 19), for the illustration of whose reign his voluminous correspondence furnishes the most authentic materials.

BOOK FOURTH.

RESIDENCE IN MEXICO.

BOOK IV.

RESIDENCE IN MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

TEZCUCAN LAKE. — DESCRIPTION OF THE CAPITAL. — PALACES AND MUSEUMS. — ROYAL HOUSEHOLD. — MONTEZUMA'S WAY OF LIFE.

1519.

THE ancient city of Mexico covered the same spot occupied by the modern capital. The great causeways touched it in the same points; the streets ran in much the same direction, nearly from north to south and from east to west; the cathedral in the *plaza mayor* stands on the same ground that was covered by the temple of the Aztec war-god; and the four principal quarters of the town are still known among the Indians by their ancient names. Yet an Aztec of the days of Montezuma, could he behold the modern metropolis, which has risen with such phœnix-like splendor from the ashes of the old, would not recognize its site as that of his own Tenochtitlan. For the latter was encompassed by the salt floods of Tezcuco, which flowed in ample canals through every part of the city; while the

Mexico of our day stands high and dry on the main land, nearly a league distant, at its centre, from the water. The cause of this apparent change in its position is the diminution of the lake, which, from the rapidity of evaporation in these elevated regions, had become perceptible before the Conquest, but which has since been greatly accelerated by artificial causes.[1]

The average level of the Tezcucan lake, at the present day, is but four feet lower than the great square of Mexico.[2] It is considerably lower than the other great basins of water which are found in the Valley. In the heavy swell sometimes caused by long and excessive rains, these latter reservoirs anciently overflowed into the Tezcuco, which, rising with the accumulated volume of waters, burst through the dikes, and, pouring into the streets of the capital, buried the lower part of the buildings under a deluge. This was comparatively a light evil when the houses stood on piles so elevated that boats might pass under them; when the streets were canals, and the ordinary mode of communication was by water. But it became more disastrous as these canals, filled up with the rubbish of the ruined Indian city, were supplanted by streets of solid earth, and the foundations of the capital were gradually reclaimed

[1] The lake, it seems, had perceptibly shrunk before the Conquest, from the testimony of Motolinia, who entered the country soon after. Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.

[2] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 95.—Cortés supposed there were regular tides in this lake. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 101.) This sorely puzzles the learned Martyr (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3); as it has more than one philosopher since, whom it has led to speculate on a subterraneous communication with the ocean! What the general called "tides" was probably the periodical swells caused by the prevalence of certain regular winds.

from the watery element. To obviate this alarming evil, the famous drain of Huehuetoca was opened, at an enormous cost, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and Mexico, after repeated inundations, has been at length placed above the reach of the flood.[3] But what was gained to the useful, in this case, as in some others, has been purchased at the expense of the beautiful. By this shrinking of the waters, the bright towns and hamlets once washed by them have been removed some miles into the interior, while a barren strip of land, ghastly from the incrustation of salts formed on the surface, has taken the place of the glowing vegetation which once enamelled the borders of the lake, and of the dark groves of oak, cedar, and sycamore which threw their broad shadows over its bosom.

The *chinampas*, that archipelago of wandering islands, to which our attention was drawn in the last chapter, have, also, nearly disappeared. These had their origin in the detached masses of earth, which, loosening from the shores, were still held together by the fibrous roots with which they were penetrated. The primitive Aztecs, in their poverty of land, availed themselves of the hint thus afforded by nature. They constructed rafts of reeds, rushes, and other fibrous materials, which, tightly knit together, formed a sufficient basis for the sediment that they drew up from the bottom of the lake. Gradually islands were formed, two or three hundred feet in length, and three or four feet in depth,

[3] Humboldt has given a minute account of this tunnel, which he pronounces one of the most stupendous hydraulic works in existence, and the completion of which, in its present form, does not date earlier than the latter part of the last century. See his Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 105, et seq.

with a rich stimulated soil, on which the economical Indian raised his vegetables and flowers for the markets of Tenochtitlan. Some of these *chinampas* were even firm enough to allow the growth of small trees, and to sustain a hut for the residence of the person that had charge of it, who with a long pole, resting on the sides or the bottom of the shallow basin, could change the position of his little territory at pleasure, which with its rich freight of vegetable stores was seen moving like some enchanted island over the water.[4]

The ancient dikes were three in number. That of Iztapalapan, by which the Spaniards entered, approaching the city from the south. That of Tepejacac, on the north, which, continuing the principal street, might be regarded, also, as a continuation of the first causeway. Lastly, the dike of Tlacopan, connecting the island-city with the continent on the west. This last causeway, memorable for the disastrous retreat of the Spaniards, was about two miles in length. They were all built in the same substantial manner, of lime and stone, were defended by draw-bridges, and were wide enough for ten or twelve horsemen to ride abreast.[5]

The rude founders of Tenochtitlan built their frail tenements of reeds and rushes on the group of small islands in the western part of the lake. In process of time, these were supplanted by more substantial buildings. A quarry in the neighborhood, of a red porous

[4] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 87, et seq.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 153.

[5] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.—Cortés, indeed, speaks of four causeways. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 102.) He may have reckoned an arm of the southern one leading to Cojohuacan, or possibly the great aqueduct of Chapoltepec.

amygdaloid, *tetzontli*, was opened, and a light, brittle stone drawn from it and wrought with little difficulty. Of this their edifices were constructed, with some reference to architectural solidity, if not elegance. Mexico, as already noticed, was the residence of the great chiefs, whom the sovereign encouraged, or rather compelled, from obvious motives of policy, to spend part of the year in the capital. It was also the temporary abode of the great lords of Tezcuco and Tlacopan, who shared, nominally at least, the sovereignty of the empire.[6] The mansions of these dignitaries, and of the principal nobles, were on a scale of rude magnificence corresponding with their state. They were low, indeed,—seldom of more than one floor. never exceeding two. But they spread over a wide extent of ground, were arranged in a quadrangular form, with a court in the centre, and were surrounded by porticoes embellished with porphyry and jasper, easily found in the neighborhood, while not unfrequently a fountain of crystal water in the centre shed a grateful coolness through the air. The dwellings of the common people were also placed on foundations of stone, which rose to the height of a few feet and were then succeeded by courses of unbaked bricks, crossed occasionally by wooden rafters.[7] Most of the

[6] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 21.

[7] Martyr gives a particular account of these dwellings, which shows that even the poorer classes were comfortably lodged. "Populares vero domus cingulo virili tenus lapideæ sunt et ipsæ, ob lacunæ incrementum per fluxum aut fluviorum in ea labentium alluvies. Super fundamentis illis magnis, lateribus tum coctis, tum æstivo sole siccatis, immixtis trabibus reliquam molem construunt; uno sunt communes domus contentæ tabulato. In solo parum hospitantur propter humidi-

streets were mean and narrow. Some few, however were wide and of great length. The principal street, conducting from the great southern causeway, penetrated in a straight line the whole length of the city, and afforded a noble vista, in which the long lines of low stone edifices were broken occasionally by intervening gardens, rising on terraces and displaying all the pomp of Aztec horticulture.

The great streets, which were coated with a hard cement, were intersected by numerous canals. Some of these were flanked by a solid way, which served as a foot-walk for passengers, and as a landing-place where boats might discharge their cargoes. Small buildings were erected at intervals, as stations for the revenue officers who collected the duties on different articles of merchandise. The canals were traversed by numerous bridges, many of which could be raised, affording the means of cutting off communication between different parts of the city.[8]

From the accounts of the ancient capital, one is reminded of those aquatic cities in the Old World, the positions of which have been selected from similar motives of economy and defence; above all, of Venice,[9] —if it be not rash to compare the rude architecture

tatem, tecta non tegulis sed bitumine quodam terreo vestiunt; ad solem captandum commodior est ille modus, breviore tempore consumi debere credendum est." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

[8] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 108.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10, 11.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[9] Martyr was struck with the resemblance. "Uti de illustrissima civitate Venetiarum legitur, ad tumulum in ea sinus Adriatici parte visum, fuisse constructam." Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

of the American Indian with the marble palaces and temples—alas, how shorn of their splendor!—which crowned the once proud mistress of the Adriatic.[10] The example of the metropolis was soon followed by the other towns in the vicinity. Instead of resting their foundations on *terra firma*, they were seen advancing far into the lake, the shallow waters of which in some parts do not exceed four feet in depth.[11] Thus an easy means of intercommunication was opened, and the surface of this inland "sea," as Cortés styles it, was darkened by thousands of canoes[12]—an Indian term—industriously engaged in the traffic between these little communities. How gay and picturesque

[10] May we not apply, without much violence, to the Aztec capital, Giovanni della Casa's spirited sonnet, contrasting the origin of Venice with its meridian glory?

"Questi Palazzi e queste logge or colte
D'ostro, di marmo e di figure elette,
Fur poche e basse case insieme accolte
Deserti lidi e povere Isolette.
Ma genti ardite d'ogni vizio sciolte
Premeano il mar con picciole barchette,
Che qui non per domar provincie molte,
Ma fuggir servitù s' eran ristrette
Non era ambizion ne' petti loro;
Ma 'l mentire abborrian più che la morte,
Nè vi regnava ingorda fame d' oro.
Se 'l Ciel v' ha dato più beata sorte,
Non sien quelle virtù che tanto onoro,
Dalle nuove ricchezze oppresse emorte."

[11] "Le lac de Tezcuco n'a généralement que trois à cinq mètres de profondeur. Dans quelques endroits le fond se trouve même déjà à moins d'un mètre." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 49.

[12] "Y cada dia entran gran multitud de Indios cargados de bastimentos y tributos, así por tierra como por agua, en acales ó barcas, que *en lengua de las Islas llaman Canoas*." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.

must have been the aspect of the lake in those days, with its shining cities, and flowering islets rocking, as it were, at anchor on the fair bosom of its waters!

The population of Tenochtitlan at the time of the Conquest is variously stated. No contemporary writer estimates it at less than sixty thousand houses, which, by the ordinary rules of reckoning, would give three hundred thousand souls.[13] If a dwelling often contained, as is asserted, several families, it would swell the amount considerably higher.[14] Nothing is more uncertain than estimates of numbers among barbarous communities, who necessarily live in a more confused and promiscuous manner than civilized, and among whom no regular system is adopted for ascertaining the population. The concurrent testimony of the Con-

[13] "Esta la cibdad de Méjico ó *Teneztutan*, que será de sesenta mil vecinos." (Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.) "Tenustitanam ipsam inquiunt sexaginta circiter esse millium domorum." (Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.) "Era Méjico, quando Cortés entró, pueblo de sesenta mil casas." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 78.) Toribio says, vaguely, "Los moradores y gente era innumerable." (Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.) The Italian translation of the "Anonymous Conqueror," who survives only in translation, says, indeed, "meglio di sessanta mila *habitatori*" (Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309); owing, probably, to a blunder in rendering the word *vecinos*, the ordinary term in Spanish statistics, which, signifying *householders*, corresponds with the Italian *fuochi*. See, also, Clavigero. (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 86, nota.) Robertson rests *exclusively* on this Italian translation for his estimate. (History of America, vol. ii. p. 281.) He cites, indeed, two other authorities in the same connection; Cortés, who says nothing of the population, and Herrera, who confirms the popular statement of "sesenta mil casas." (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.) The fact is of some importance.

[14] "In the smallest houses, with few exceptions, two, four, and even six families resided together." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.

querors; the extent of the city, which was said to be nearly three leagues in circumference;[15] the immense size of its great market-place; the long lines of edifices, vestiges of whose ruins may still be found in the suburbs, miles from the modern city;[16] the fame of the metropolis throughout Anahuac, which, however, could boast many large and populous places; lastly, the economical husbandry and the ingenious contrivances to extract aliment from the most unpromising sources,[17] —all attest a numerous population, far beyond that of the present capital.[18]

[15] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[16] "C'est sur le chemin qui mène à Tanepantla et aux Ahuahuetes que l'on peut marcher plus d'une heure entre les ruines de l'ancienne ville. On y reconnaît, ainsi que sur la route de Tacuba et d'Iztapalapan, combien Mexico, rebâti par Cortéz, est plus petit que l'était Tenochtitlan sous le dernier des Montezuma. L'énorme grandeur du marché de Tlatelolco, dont on reconnaît encore les limites, prouve combien la population de l'ancienne ville doit avoir été considérable." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 43.

[17] A common food with the lower classes was a glutinous scum found in the lakes, which they made into a sort of cake, having a savor not unlike cheese. (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.)—[This "scum" consists in fact of the eggs of aquatic insects, with which cakes are made, in the same manner as with the spawn of fishes. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 366.]*

[18] One is confirmed in this inference by comparing the two maps at the end of the first edition of Bullock's "Mexico;" one of the modern

[* Little can be inferred, in regard to the difference of population, from the use of the *ahuahutle*, as these cakes are called, since it is still a favorite article of food at Tezcuco, where the eggs are found in great abundance, and sold in the market both in the prepared state and in lumps as collected at the edge of the lake. "The flies which produce these eggs are called by the Mexicans *axayacatl*, or *water-face*,—*Corixa femorata*, and *Notonecta unifasciata*, according to MM. Meneville and Virlet d'Aoust." Tylor, Anahuac, p. 156.—ED.]

A careful police provided for the health and cleanliness of the city. A thousand persons are said to have

city, the other of the ancient, taken from Boturini's museum, and showing its regular arrangement of streets and canals; as regular, indeed, as the squares on a chess-board.*

* [The doubts so often excited by the descriptions of ancient Mexico in the accounts of the Spanish discoverers, like the similar incredulity formerly entertained in regard to the narrations of Herodotus, are dispelled by a critical investigation in conjunction with the results of modern explorations. Among recent travellers, Mr. Edward B. Tylor, whose learning and acumen have been displayed in various ethnological studies, is entitled to especial confidence. In company with Mr. Christy, the well-known collector, he examined the ploughed fields in the neighborhood of Mexico, making repeated trials whether it was possible to stand in any spot where no relic of the former population was within reach. "But this," he says, "we could not do. Everywhere the ground was full of unglazed pottery and obsidian." "We noticed by the sides of the road, and where ditches had been cut, numbers of old Mexican stone-floors covered with stucco. The earth has accumulated above them to the depth of two or three feet, so that their position is like that of the Roman pavements so often found in Europe; and we may guess, from what we saw exposed, how great must be the number of such remains still hidden, and how vast a population must once have inhabited this plain, now almost deserted." "When we left England," he adds, "we both doubted the accounts of the historians of the Conquest, believing that they had exaggerated the numbers of the population, and the size of the cities, from a natural desire to make the most of their victories, and to write as wonderful a history as they could, as historians are prone to do. But our examination of Mexican remains soon induced us to withdraw this accusation, and even made us inclined to blame the chroniclers for having had no eyes for the wonderful things that surrounded them. I do not mean by this that we felt inclined to swallow the monstrous exaggerations of Solis and Gomara and other Spanish chroniclers, who seemed to think that it was as easy to say a thousand as a hundred, and that it sounded much better. But when this class of writers are set aside, and the more valuable authorities severely criticised, it does not seem to us that the history thus extracted from these

been daily employed in watering and sweeping the streets,[19] so that a man—to borrow the language of an old Spaniard—"could walk through them with as little danger of soiling his feet as his hands."[20] The water, in a city washed on all sides by the salt floods, was extremely brackish. A liberal supply of the pure element, however, was brought from Chapoltepec, "the grasshopper's hill," less than a league distant. It was brought through an earthen pipe, along a dike constructed for the purpose. That there might be no failure in so essential an article when repairs were going on, a double course of pipes was laid. In this way a column of water of the size of a man's body was conducted into the heart of the capital, where it fed the fountains and reservoirs of the principal mansions. Openings were made in the aqueduct as it crossed the bridges, and thus a supply was furnished to the canoes below, by means of which it was transported to all parts of the city.[21]

While Montezuma encouraged a taste for architectural magnificence in his nobles, he contributed his own

[19] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 274.

[20] "Era tan barrido y el suelo tan asentado y liso, que aunque la planta del pie fuera tan delicada como la de la mano no recibiera el pie detrimento ninguno en andar descalzo." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.

[21] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 108.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

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sources is much less reliable than European history of the same period. There is, perhaps, no better way of expressing this opinion than to say that what we saw of Mexico tended generally to confirm Prescott's History of the Conquest, and but seldom to make his statements appear to us improbable." Anahuac, p. 147.—ED.]

share towards the embellishment of the city. It was in his reign that the famous calendar stone, weighing, probably, in its primitive state, nearly fifty tons, was transported from its native quarry, many leagues distant, to the capital, where it still forms one of the most curious monuments of Aztec science. Indeed, when we reflect on the difficulty of hewing such a stupendous mass from its hard basaltic bed without the aid of iron tools, and that of transporting it such a distance across land and water without the help of animals, we may well feel admiration at the mechanical ingenuity and enterprise of the people who accomplished it.[22]

Not content with the spacious residence of his father, Montezuma erected another on a yet more magnificent scale. It occupied, as before mentioned, the ground partly covered by the private dwellings on one side of the *plaza mayor* of the modern city. This building, or, as it might more correctly be styled, pile of buildings, spread over an extent of ground so vast that, as one of the Conquerors assures us, its terraced roof might have afforded ample room for thirty knights to run their courses in a regular tourney.[23] I have already noticed its interior decorations, its fanciful draperies, its roofs inlaid with cedar and other odoriferous woods, held together without a nail, and, probably, without a

[22] These immense masses, according to Martyr, who gathered his information from eye-witnesses, were transported by means of long files of men, who dragged them with ropes over huge wooden rollers. (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.) It was the manner in which the Egyptians removed their enormous blocks of granite, as appears from numerous reliefs sculptured on their buildings.

[23] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom iii. fol. 309.

knowledge of the arch,[24] its numerous and spacious apartments, which Cortés, with enthusiastic hyperbole, does not hesitate to declare superior to anything of the kind in Spain.[25]

Adjoining the principal edifice were others, devoted to various objects. One was an armory, filled with the weapons and military dresses worn by the Aztecs, all kept in the most perfect order, ready for instant use. The emperor was himself very expert in the management of the *maquahuitl*, or Indian sword, and took great delight in witnessing athletic exercises and the mimic representation of war by his young nobility. Another building was used as a granary, and others as warehouses for the different articles of food and apparel contributed by the districts charged with the maintenance of the royal household.

There were, also, edifices appropriated to objects of quite another kind. One of these was an immense aviary, in which birds of splendid plumage were assembled from all parts of the empire. Here was the scarlet cardinal, the golden pheasant, the endless parrot-tribe with their rainbow hues (the royal green predominant), and that miniature miracle of nature, the humming-bird, which delights to revel among the honeysuckle

[24] "Ricos edificios," says the Licentiate Zuazo, speaking of the buildings in Anahuac generally, "ecepto que no se halla alguno con *boveda*." (Carta, MS.) The writer made large and careful observation, the year after the Conquest. His assertion, if it be received, will settle a question much mooted among antiquaries.

[25] "His residence within the city was so marvellous for its beauty and vastness that it seems to me almost impossible to describe it. I shall therefore say no more of it than that there is nothing like it in Spain." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 111.

bowers of Mexico.[26] Three hundred attendants had charge of this aviary, who made themselves acquainted with the appropriate food of its inmates, oftentimes procured at great cost, and in the moulting season were careful to collect the beautiful plumage, which, with its many-colored tints, furnished the materials for the Aztec painter.

A separate building was reserved for the fierce birds of prey; the voracious vulture-tribes and eagles of enormous size, whose home was in the snowy solitudes of the Andes. No less than five hundred turkeys, the cheapest meat in Mexico, were allowed for the daily consumption of these tyrants of the feathered race.

Adjoining this aviary was a menagerie of wild animals, gathered from the mountain forests, and even from the remote swamps of the *tierra caliente*. The resemblance of the different species to those in the Old World, with which no one of them, however, was identical, led to a perpetual confusion in the nomenclature of the Spaniards, as it has since done in that of better-instructed naturalists. The collection was still further swelled by a great number of reptiles and serpents remarkable for their size and venomous qualities, among which the Spaniards

[26] Herrera's account of these feathered insects, if one may so style them, shows the fanciful errors into which even men of science were led in regard to the new tribes of animals discovered in America: "There are some birds in the country of the size of butterflies, with long beaks, brilliant plumage, much esteemed for the curious works made of them. Like the bees, they live on flowers, and the dew which settles on them; and when the rainy season is over, and the dry weather sets in, they fasten themselves to the trees by their beaks and soon die. But in the following year, when the new rains come, they come to life again"! Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 21

beheld the fiery little animal "with the castanets in his tail," the terror of the American wilderness.[27] The serpents were confined in long cages lined with down or feathers, or in troughs of mud and water. The beasts and birds of prey were provided with apartments large enough to allow of their moving about, and secured by a strong lattice-work, through which light and air were freely admitted. The whole was placed under the charge of numerous keepers, who acquainted themselves with the habits of their prisoners and provided for their comfort and cleanliness. With what deep interest would the enlightened naturalist of that day—an Oviedo, or a Martyr, for example—have surveyed this magnificent collection, in which the various tribes which roamed over the Western wilderness, the unknown races of an unknown world, were brought into one view! How would they have delighted to study the peculiarities of these new species, compared with those of their own hemisphere, and thus have risen to some comprehension of the general laws by which Nature acts in all her works! The rude followers of Cortés did not trouble themselves with such refined speculations. They gazed on the spectacle with a vague curiosity not unmixed with awe; and, as they listened to the wild cries of the ferocious animals and the hissings of the serpents, they almost fancied themselves in the infernal regions.[28]

[27] "Pues mas tenian," says the honest Captain Diaz, "en aquella maldita casa muchas Víboras, y Culebras emponçoñadas, que traen en las colas vnos que suenan como cascabeles; estas son las peores Víboras de todas." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

[28] "Digamos aora," exclaims Captain Diaz, 'las cosas infernales

I must not omit to notice a strange collection of human monsters, dwarfs, and other unfortunate persons in whose organization Nature had capriciously deviated from her regular laws. Such hideous anomalies were regarded by the Aztecs as a suitable appendage of state. It is even said they were in some cases the result of artificial means, employed by unnatural parents desirous to secure a provision for their offspring by thus qualifying them for a place in the royal museum![29]

Extensive gardens were spread out around these buildings, filled with fragrant shrubs and flowers, and especially with medicinal plants.[30] No country has afforded more numerous species of these last than New Spain; and their virtues were perfectly understood by the Aztecs, with whom medical botany may be said to have been studied as a science. Amidst this labyrinth of sweet-scented groves and shrubberies, fountains of pure water might be seen throwing up their sparkling jets and scattering refreshing dews over the blossoms. Ten large tanks, well stocked with fish, afforded a

que hazian, quando bramauan los Tigres y Leones, y aullauan los Adiues y Zorros, y silbauan las Sierpes, era grima oirlo, y parecia infierno." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

[29] Ibid., ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 111–113.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap 11, 46.

[30] Montezuma, according to Gomara, would allow no fruit-trees, considering them as unsuitable to pleasure-grounds. (Crónica, cap 75.) Toribio says, to the same effect, "Los Indios Señores no procuran árboles de fruta, porque se la traen sus vasallos, sino árboles de floresta, de donde cojan rosas, y adonde se crian aves, así para gozar del canto, como para las tirar con Cerbatana, de la cual son grandes tiradores." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.

retreat on their margins to various tribes of water-fowl, whose habits were so carefully consulted that some of these ponds were of salt water, as that which they most loved to frequent. A tessellated pavement of marble enclosed the ample basins, which were overhung by light and fanciful pavilions, that admitted the perfumed breezes of the gardens, and offered a grateful shelter to the monarch and his mistresses in the sultry heats of summer.[31]

But the most luxurious residence of the Aztec monarch, at that season, was the royal hill of Chapoltepec, —a spot consecrated, moreover, by the ashes of his ancestors. It stood in a westerly direction from the capital, and its base was, in his day, washed by the waters of the Tezcuco. On its lofty crest of porphyritic rock there now stands the magnificent, though desolate, castle erected by the young viceroy Galvez at the close of the seventeenth century.[32] The view from its windows is one of the finest in the environs of Mexico. The landscape is not disfigured here, as in many other quarters, by the white and barren patches, so offensive to the sight; but the eye wanders over an unbroken expanse of meadows and cultivated fields, waving with rich harvests of European grain. Montezuma's gardens stretched for miles around the base of the hill. Two statues of that monarch and his father, cut in bas-relief in the porphyry, were spared

[31] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 6.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11.

[32] [It is used at the present day for a military school. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 370.]

till the middle of the last century;[33] and the grounds are still shaded by gigantic cypresses, more than fifty feet in circumference, which were centuries old at the time of the Conquest.[34] The place is now a tangled wilderness of wild shrubs, where the myrtle mingles its dark, glossy leaves with the red berries and delicate foliage of the pepper-tree. Surely there is no spot better suited to awaken meditation on the past; none where the traveller, as he sits under those stately cypresses gray with the moss of ages, can so fitly ponder on the sad destinies of the Indian races and the monarch who once held his courtly revels under the shadow of their branches.

The domestic establishment of Montezuma was on the same scale of barbaric splendor as everything else about him. He could boast as many wives as are found in the harem of an Eastern sultan.[35] They were lodged in their own apartments, and provided with every accommodation, according to their ideas, for personal comfort and cleanliness. They passed their hours in the usual feminine employments of weaving and embroidery, especially in the graceful feather-work, for which such rich materials were furnished by the royal

33 Gomara, a competent critic, who saw them just before their destruction, praises their execution. Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 81–83.—Also, *ante*, vol. i. p. 145.

34 [Yet the whole of this beautiful grove was not spared. The axes of the Conquerors levelled such of the trees as grew round the fountain of Chapoltepec and dropped their decayed leaves into its waters. The order of the municipality, dated February 28, 1527, is quoted by Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 290.]

35 No less than one thousand, if we believe Gomara; who adds the edifying intelligence, "que huvo vez, que tuvo ciento i cincuenta preñadas á un tiempo!"

aviaries. They conducted themselves with strict decorum, under the supervision of certain aged females, who acted in the respectable capacity of duennas, in the same manner as in the religious houses attached to the *teocallis*. The palace was supplied with numerous baths, and Montezuma set the example, in his own person, of frequent ablutions. He bathed at least once, and changed his dress four times, it is said, every day.[36] He never put on the same apparel a second time, but gave it away to his attendants. Queen Elizabeth, with a similar taste for costume, showed a less princely spirit in hoarding her discarded suits. Her wardrobe was, probably, somewhat more costly than that of the Indian emperor.

Besides his numerous female retinue, the halls and antechambers were filled with nobles in constant attendance on his person, who served also as a sort of body-guard. It had been usual for plebeians of merit to fill certain offices in the palace. But the haughty Montezuma refused to be waited upon by any but men of noble birth. They were not unfrequently the sons of the great chiefs, and remained as hostages in the absence of their fathers; thus serving the double purpose of security and state.[37]

[36] "Vestíase todos los dias quatro maneras de vestiduras todas nuevas, y nunca mas se las vestia otra vez." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 114.

[37] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 67, 71, 76.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 113, 114.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—"Á la puerta de la sala estaba vn patio mui grande en que habia cien aposentos de 25 ó 30 pies de largo cada vno sobre sí en torno de dicho patio, é allí estaban los Señores principales aposentados como guardas del palacio

His meals the emperor took alone. The well-matted floor of a large saloon was covered with hundreds of dishes.[38] Sometimes Montezuma himself, but more frequently his steward, indicated those which he preferred, and which were kept hot by means of chafing-dishes.[39] The royal bill of fare comprehended, besides domestic animals, game from the distant forests, and fish which, the day before, was swimming in the Gulf of Mexico! They were dressed in manifold ways, for the Aztec *artistes*, as we have already had occasion to notice, had penetrated deep into the mysteries of culinary science.[40]

The meats were served by the attendant nobles, who then resigned the office of waiting on the monarch to maidens selected for their personal grace and beauty. A screen of richly gilt and carved wood was drawn around

ordinarias, y estos tales aposentos se llaman galpones, los quales á la contina ocupan mas de 600 hombres, que jamas se quitaban de allí, é cada vno de aquellos tenian mas de 30 servidores de manera que á lo menos nunca faltaban 3000 hombres de guerra en esta guarda cotediana del palacio." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 46.) A very curious and full account of Montezuma's household is given by this author, as he gathered it from the Spaniards who saw it in its splendor. As Oviedo's history still remains in manuscript, I have transferred the chapter in the original Castilian to Appendix, Part 2, No. 10.

[38] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ubi supra.

[39] "Y porque la Tierra es fria trahian debaxo de cada plato y escudilla de manjar un braserico con brasa, porque no se enfriasse." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 113.

[40] Bernal Diaz has given us a few items of the royal *carte*. The first cover is rather a startling one, being a fricassee or stew of little children! "*carnes de muchachos de poca edad.*" He admits, however, that this is somewhat apocryphal. Ibid., ubi supra.

him, so as to conceal him from vulgar eyes during the repast. He was seated on a cushion, and the dinner was served on a low table covered with a delicate cotton cloth. The dishes were of the finest ware of Cholula. He had a service of gold, which was reserved for religious celebrations. Indeed, it would scarcely have comported with even his princely revenues to have used it on ordinary occasions, when his table-equipage was not allowed to appear a second time, but was given away to his attendants. The saloon was lighted by torches made of a resinous wood, which sent forth a sweet odor and, probably, not a little smoke, as they burned. At his meal, he was attended by five or six of his ancient counsellors, who stood at a respectful distance, answering his questions, and occasionally rejoiced by some of the viands with which he complimented them from his table.

This course of solid dishes was succeeded by another of sweetmeats and pastry, for which the Aztec cooks, provided with the important requisites of maize-flour, eggs, and the rich sugar of the aloe, were famous. Two girls were occupied at the farther end of the apartment, during dinner, in preparing fine rolls and wafers, with which they garnished the board from time to time. The emperor took no other beverage than the *chocolatl*, a potation of chocolate, flavored with vanilla and other spices, and so prepared as to be reduced to a froth of the consistency of honey, which gradually dissolved in the mouth. This beverage, if so it could be called, was served in golden goblets, with spoons of the same metal or of tortoise-shell finely wrought. The emperor was exceedingly fond

of it, to judge from the quantity—no less than fifty jars or pitchers—prepared for his own daily consumption.[41] Two thousand more were allowed for that of his household.[42]

The general arrangement of the meal seems to have been not very unlike that of Europeans. But no prince in Europe could boast a dessert which could compare with that of the Aztec emperor. For it was gathered fresh from the most opposite climes; and his board displayed the products of his own temperate region, and the luscious fruits of the tropics, plucked, the day previous, from the green groves of the *tierra caliente*, and transmitted with the speed of steam, by means of couriers, to the capital. It was as if some kind fairy should crown our banquets with the spicy products that but yesterday were growing in a sunny isle of the far-off Indian seas!*

After the emperor's appetite was appeased, water was handed to him by the female attendants in a silver basin, in the same manner as had been done before commencing his meal; for the Aztecs were as constant in their ablutions, at these times, as any nation of the East. Pipes were then brought, made of a varnished

[41] "*Lo que yo vi*," says Diaz, speaking from his own observation, "que traian sobre cincuenta jarros grandes hechos de buen cacao con su espuma, y de lo que bebia." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

[42] Ibid., ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 113, 114.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 11, 46.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 67.

* [This description, as Señor Alaman observes, seems to have a tincture of romance, since many of the fruits now produced in such abundance in Mexico were unknown there previous to the Conquest. Conquista de Méjico, trad. de Vega, tom. i. p. 373.—ED.]

and richly-gilt wood, from which he inhaled, sometimes through the nose, at others through the mouth, the fumes of an intoxicating weed, "called *tobacco*,"[43] mingled with liquid amber. While this soothing process of fumigation was going on, the emperor enjoyed the exhibitions of his mountebanks and jugglers, of whom a regular corps was attached to the palace. No people, not even those of China or Hindostan, surpassed the Aztecs in feats of agility and legerdemain.[44]

Sometimes he amused himself with his jester; for the Indian monarch had his jesters, as well as his more refined brethren of Europe, at that day. Indeed, he used to say that more instruction was to be gathered from them than from wiser men, for they dared to tell the truth. At other times he witnessed the graceful dances of his women, or took delight in listening to music,—if the rude minstrelsy of the Mexicans deserve that name,—accompanied by a chant, in slow and solemn cadence, celebrating the heroic deeds of great Aztec warriors, or of his own princely line.

When he had sufficiently refreshed his spirits with these diversions, he composed himself to sleep, for in his *siesta* he was as regular as a Spaniard. On awaking, he gave audience to ambassadors from foreign states or his own tributary cities, or to such caciques as had suits

[43] "Tambien le ponian en la mesa tres cañutos muy pintados, y dorados, y dentro traian liquidámbar, rebuelto con vnas yervas *que se dize tabaco*." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.

[44] The feats of jugglers and tumblers were a favorite diversion with the Grand Khan of China, as Sir John Maundeville informs us. (Voiage and Travaille, chap. 22.) The Aztec mountebanks had such repute, that Cortés sent two of them to Rome to amuse his Holiness Clement VII. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 186.

to prefer to him. They were introduced by the young nobles in attendance, and, whatever might be their rank, unless of the blood royal, they were obliged to submit to the humiliation of shrouding their rich dresses under the coarse mantle of *nequen*, and entering bare-footed, with downcast eyes, into the presence. The emperor addressed few and brief remarks to the suitors, answering them generally by his secretaries; and the parties retired with the same reverential obeisance, taking care to keep their faces turned towards the monarch. Well might Cortés exclaim that no court, whether of the Grand Seignior or any other infidel, ever displayed so pompous and elaborate a ceremonial![45]

Besides the crowd of retainers already noticed, the royal household was not complete without a host of artisans constantly employed in the erection or repair of buildings, besides a great number of jewellers and persons skilled in working metals, who found abundant demand for their trinkets among the dark-eyed beauties of the harem. The imperial mummers and jugglers were also very numerous, and the dancers belonging to the palace occupied a particular district of the city, appropriated exclusively to them.

The maintenance of this little host, amounting to some thousands of individuals, involved a heavy expenditure, requiring accounts of a complicated and, to a simple people, it might well be, embarrassing nature. Everything, however, was conducted with perfect order;

[45] "Ninguno de los Soldanes, ni otro ningun señor infiel, de los que hasta agora se tiene noticia, no creo, que tantas, ni tales ceremonias en servicio tengan." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 115.

and all the various receipts and disbursements were set down in the picture-writing of the country. The arithmetical characters were of a more refined and conventional sort than those for narrative purposes; and a separate apartment was filled with hieroglyphical legers, exhibiting a complete view of the economy of the palace. The care of all this was intrusted to a treasurer, who acted as a sort of major-domo in the household, having a general superintendence over all its concerns. This responsible office, on the arrival of the Spaniards, was in the hands of a trusty cacique named Tápia.[46] *

Such is the picture of Montezuma's domestic establishment and way of living, as delineated by the Conquerors and their immediate followers, who had the best means of information;[47] too highly colored, it may be, by the proneness to exaggerate, which was natural to those who first witnessed a spectacle so striking to the imagination, so new and unexpected. I have thought it best to present the full details, trivial though they may seem to the reader, as affording a curious picture of manners so superior in point of refinement

[46] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 91.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 110–115.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.

[47] If the historian will descend but a generation later for his authorities, he may find materials for as good a chapter as any in Sir John Maundeville or the Arabian Nights.

* [The name, which is Spanish, not Aztec, was that given to him by the Conquerors, perhaps with some reference to one of their own number, Andrés de Tápia.—ED.]

to those of the other aboriginal tribes on the North American continent. Nor are they, in fact, so trivial, when we reflect that in these details of private life we possess a surer measure of civilization than in those of a public nature.

In surveying them we are strongly reminded of the civilization of the East; not of that higher, intellectual kind which belonged to the more polished Arabs and the Persians, but that semi-civilization which has distinguished, for example, the Tartar races, among whom art, and even science, have made, indeed, some progress in their adaptation to material wants and sensual gratification, but little in reference to the higher and more ennobling interests of humanity. It is characteristic of such a people to find a puerile pleasure in a dazzling and ostentatious pageantry; to mistake show for substance, vain pomp for power; to hedge round the throne itself with a barren and burdensome ceremonial, the counterfeit of real majesty.

Even this, however, was an advance in refinement, compared with the rude manners of the earlier Aztecs. The change may, doubtless, be referred in some degree to the personal influence of Montezuma. In his younger days he had tempered the fierce habits of the soldier with the milder profession of religion. In later life he had withdrawn himself still more from the brutalizing occupations of war, and his manners acquired a refinement, tinctured, it may be added, with an effeminacy, unknown to his martial predecessors.

The condition of the empire, too, under his reign, was favorable to this change. The dismemberment of the Tezcucan kingdom on the death of the great

Nezahualpilli had left the Aztec monarchy without a rival; and it soon spread its colossal arms over the farthest limits of Anahuac. The aspiring mind of Montezuma rose with the acquisition of wealth and power; and he displayed the consciousness of new importance by the assumption of unprecedented state. He affected a reserve unknown to his predecessors, withdrew his person from the vulgar eye, and fenced himself round with an elaborate and courtly etiquette. When he went abroad, it was in state, on some public occasion, usually to the great temple, to take part in the religious services; and as he passed along he exacted from his people, as we have seen, the homage of an adulation worthy of an Oriental despot.[48] His haughty demeanor touched the pride of his more potent vassals, particularly those who, at a distance, felt themselves nearly independent of his authority. His exactions, demanded by the profuse expenditure of his palace, scattered broad-cast the seeds of discontent; and, while the empire seemed towering in its most palmy and prosperous state, the canker had eaten deepest into its heart.

[48] "Referre in tanto rege piget superbam mutationem vestis, et desideratas humi jacentium adulationes." (Livy, Hist., lib. 9, cap. 18.) The remarks of the Roman historian in reference to Alexander, after he was infected by the manners of Persia, fit equally well the Aztec emperor.

CHAPTER II.

MARKET OF MEXICO.—GREAT TEMPLE.—INTERIOR SANCTUARIES.—SPANISH QUARTERS.

1519.

FOUR days had elapsed since the Spaniards made their entry into Mexico. Whatever schemes their commander may have revolved in his mind, he felt that he could determine on no plan of operations till he had seen more of the capital and ascertained by his own inspection the nature of its resources. He accordingly, as was observed at the close of the last Book, sent to Montezuma, asking permission to visit the great *teocalli*, and some other places in the city.

The friendly monarch consented without difficulty. He even prepared to go in person to the great temple to receive his guests there,—it may be, to shield the shrine of his tutelar deity from any attempted profanation. He was acquainted, as we have already seen, with the proceedings of the Spaniards on similar occasions in the course of their march. Cortés put himself at the head of his little corps of cavalry, and nearly all the Spanish foot, as usual, and followed the caciques sent by Montezuma to guide him. They proposed first to conduct him to the great market of Tlatelolco, in the western part of the city.

On the way, the Spaniards were struck, in the same

manner as they had been on entering the capital, with the appearance of the inhabitants, and their great superiority in the style and quality of their dress over the people of the lower countries.[1] The *tilmatli*, or cloak thrown over the shoulders and tied round the neck, made of cotton of different degrees of fineness, according to the condition of the wearer, and the ample sash around the loins, were often wrought in rich and elegant figures and edged with a deep fringe or tassel. As the weather was now growing cool, mantles of fur or of the gorgeous feather-work were sometimes substituted. The latter combined the advantage of great warmth with beauty.[2] The Mexicans had also the art of spinning a fine thread of the hair of the rabbit and other animals, which they wove into a delicate web that took a permanent dye.

The women, as in other parts of the country, seemed to go about as freely as the men. They wore several skirts or petticoats of different lengths, with highly-ornamented borders, and sometimes over them loose flowing robes, which reached to the ankles. These, also, were made of cotton, for the wealthier classes,

[1] "La Gente de esta Ciudad es de mas manera y primor en su vestido, y servicio, que no la otra de estas otras Provincias, y Ciudades porque como allí estaba siempre este Señor Muteczuma, y todos los Señores sus Vasallos ocurrian siempre á la Ciudad, habia en ella mas manera, y policía en todas las cosas." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 109.

[2] Zuazo, speaking of the beauty and warmth of this national fabric, says, "Ví muchas mantas de á dos haces labradas de plumas de papos de aves tan suaves, que trayendo la mano por encima á pelo y á pospelo, no era mas que vna manta zebellina mui bien adobada: hice pesar vna dellas; no pesó mas de seis onzas. Dicen que en el tiempo del Ynbierno una abasta para encima de la camisa sin otro cobertor ni mas ropa encima de la cama." Carta, MS.

of a fine texture, prettily embroidered.[3] No veils were worn here, as in some other parts of Anahuac, where they were made of the aloe thread, or of the light web of hair, above noticed. The Aztec women had their faces exposed; and their dark, raven tresses floated luxuriantly over their shoulders, revealing features which, although of a dusky or rather cinnamon hue, were not unfrequently pleasing, while touched with the serious, even sad expression characteristic of the national physiognomy.[4]

On drawing near to the *tianguez*, or great market, the Spaniards were astonished at the throng of people pressing towards it, and on entering the place their surprise was still further heightened by the sight of the multitudes assembled there, and the dimensions of the enclosure, thrice as large as the celebrated square of Salamanca.[5] Here were met together traders from all parts, with the products and manufactures peculiar to their countries; the goldsmiths of Azcapozalco; the potters and jewellers of Cholula, the painters of Tezcuco, the stone-cutters of Tenajocan, the hunters of Xilotepec, the fishermen of Cuitlahuac, the fruiterers of the warm countries, the mat- and chair-makers of Quauhtitlan, and the florists of Xochimilco,—all busily engaged in recommending their respective wares and in chaffering with purchasers.[6]

[3] "Sono lunghe & large, lauorate di bellisimi, & molto gentili lauori sparsi per esse, cō le loro frangie, ò orletti ben lauorati che compariscono benissimo." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[4] Ibid., fol. 305.

[5] Ibid., fol. 309.

[6] "Quivi concorrevano i Pentolai, ed i Giojellieri di Cholulla, gli

The market-place was surrounded by deep porticoes, and the several articles had each its own quarter allotted to it. Here might be seen cotton piled up in bales, or manufactured into dresses and articles of domestic use, as tapestry, curtains, coverlets, and the like. The richly stained and nice fabrics reminded Cortés of the *alcayceria*, or silk-market, of Granada. There was the quarter assigned to the goldsmiths, where the purchaser might find various articles of ornament or use formed of the precious metals, or curious toys, such as we have already had occasion to notice, made in imitation of birds and fishes, with scales and feathers alternately of gold and silver, and with movable heads and bodies. These fantastic little trinkets were often garnished with precious stones, and showed a patient, puerile ingenuity in the manufacture, like that of the Chinese.[7]

Orefici d' Azcapozalco, i Pittori di Tezcuco, gli Scarpellini di Tenajocan, i Cacciatori di Xilotepec, i Pescatori di Cuitlahuac, i fruttajuoli de' paesi caldi, gli artefici di stuoje, e di scranne di Quauhtitlan ed i coltivatori de' fiori di Xochimilco." Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 165.

7 "Oro y plata, piedras de valor, con otros plumajes é argenterías maravillosas, y con tanto primor fabricadas que excede todo ingenio humano para comprenderlas y alcanzarlas." (Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.) The licentiate then enumerates several of these elegant pieces of mechanism. Cortés is not less emphatic in his admiration: "Contrahechas de oro, y plata, y piedras y plumas, tan al natural lo de Oro, y Plata, que no ha Platero en el Mundo que mejor lo hiciesse, y lo de las Piedras, que no baste juicio comprehender con que Instrumentos se hiciesse tan perfecto, y lo de Pluma, que ni de Cera, ni en ningun broslado se podria hacer tan maravillosamente." (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 110.) Peter Martyr, a less prejudiced critic than Cortés, who saw and examined many of these golden trinkets afterwards in Castile, bears the same testimony to the exquisite character of the

In an adjoining quarter were collected specimens of pottery coarse and fine, vases of wood elaborately carved, varnished or gilt, of curious and sometimes graceful forms. There were also hatchets made of copper alloyed with tin, the substitute, and, as it proved, not a bad one, for iron. The soldier found here all the implements of his trade: the casque fashioned into the head of some wild animal, with its grinning defences of teeth, and bristling crest dyed with the rich tint of the cochineal;[8] the *escaupil*, or quilted doublet of cotton, the rich surcoat of feather-mail, and weapons of all sorts, copper-headed lances and arrows, and the broad *maquahuitl*, the Mexican sword, with its sharp blades of *itztli*. Here were razors and mirrors of this same hard and polished mineral, which served so many of the purposes of steel with the Aztecs.[9] In the square were also to be found booths occupied by barbers, who used these same razors in their vocation. For the Mexicans, contrary to the popular and erroneous notions respecting the aborigines of the New World, had beards, though scanty ones. Other shops or booths were tenanted by apothecaries, well provided with drugs, roots, and different medicinal preparations.

workmanship, which, he says, far surpassed the value of the material. De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

[8] Herrera makes the unauthorized assertion, repeated by Solís, that the Mexicans were unacquainted with the value of the cochineal till it was taught them by the Spaniards. (Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 4, lib. 8, cap. 11.) The natives, on the contrary, took infinite pains to rear the insect on plantations of the cactus, and it formed one of the staple tributes to the crown from certain districts. See the tribute-rolls, ap. Lorenzana, Nos. 23, 24.—Hernandez, Hist. Plantarum, lib. 6, cap. 116.—Also, Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 114, nota.

[9] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 143.

In other places, again, blank books or maps for the hieroglyphical picture-writing were to be seen, folded together like fans, and made of cotton, skins, or more commonly the fibres of the agave, the Aztec papyrus.

Under some of the porticoes they saw hides raw and dressed, and various articles for domestic or personal use made of the leather. Animals, both wild and tame, were offered for sale, and near them, perhaps, a gang of slaves, with collars round their necks, intimating they were likewise on sale,—a spectacle unhappily not confined to the barbarian markets of Mexico, though the evils of their condition were aggravated there by the consciousness that a life of degradation might be consummated at any moment by the dreadful doom of sacrifice.

The heavier materials for building, as stone, lime, timber, were considered too bulky to be allowed a place in the square, and were deposited in the adjacent streets on the borders of the canals. It would be tedious to enumerate all the various articles, whether for luxury or daily use, which were collected from all quarters in this vast bazaar. I must not omit to mention, however, the display of provisions, one of the most attractive features of the *tianguez;* meats of all kinds, domestic poultry, game from the neighboring mountains, fish from the lakes and streams, fruits in all the delicious abundance of these temperate regions, green vegetables, and the unfailing maize. There was many a viand, too, ready dressed, which sent up its savory steams provoking the appetite of the idle passenger; pastry, bread of the Indian corn, cakes, and

confectionery.[10] Along with these were to be seen cooling or stimulating beverages, the spicy foaming *chocolatl*, with its delicate aroma of vanilla, and the inebriating *pulque*, the fermented juice of the aloe. All these commodities, and every stall and portico, were set out, or rather smothered, with flowers, showing—on a much greater scale, indeed—a taste similar to that displayed in the markets of modern Mexico. Flowers seem to be the spontaneous growth of this luxuriant soil; which, instead of noxious weeds, as in other regions, is ever ready, without the aid of man, to cover up its nakedness with this rich and variegated livery of Nature.[11]

I will spare the reader the repetition of all the particulars enumerated by the bewildered Spaniards, which are of some interest as evincing the various mechanical skill and the polished wants, resembling those of a refined community rather than of a nation of savages. It was the *material* civilization, which belongs neither to the one nor the other. The Aztec had plainly reached that middle station, as far above the rude races

[10] Zuazo, who seems to have been nice in these matters, concludes a paragraph of dainties with the following tribute to the Aztec *cuisine*: "Vendense huebos asados, crudos, en tortilla, é diversidad de guisados que se suelen guisar, con otras cazuelas y pasteles, que en el mal cocinado de Medina, ni en otros lugares de Tlamencos dicen que hai ni se pueden hallar tales trujamanes." Carta, MS.

[11] Ample details—many more than I have thought it necessary to give—of the Aztec market of Tlatelolco may be found in the writings of all the old Spaniards who visited the capital. Among others, see Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 103–105.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.

of the New World as it was below the cultivated communities of the Old.

As to the numbers assembled in the market, the estimates differ, as usual. The Spaniards often visited the place, and no one states the amount at less than forty thousand! Some carry it much higher.[12] Without relying too much on the arithmetic of the Conquerors, it is certain that on this occasion, which occurred every fifth day, the city swarmed with a motley crowd of strangers, not only from the vicinity, but from many leagues around; the causeways were thronged, and the lake was darkened by canoes filled with traders flocking to the great *tianguez*. It resembled, indeed, the periodical fairs in Europe, not as they exist now, but as they existed in the Middle Ages, when, from the difficulties of intercommunication, they served as the great central marts for commercial intercourse, exercising a most important and salutary influence on the community.

The exchanges were conducted partly by barter, but more usually in the currency of the country. This consisted of bits of tin stamped with a character like a T, bags of cacao, the value of which was regulated

[12] Zuazo raises it to 80,000! (Carta, MS.) Cortés to 60,000. (Rel. Seg., ubi supra.) The most modest computation is that of the "Anonymous Conqueror," who says from 40,000 to 50,000. "Et il giorno del mercato, che si fa di cinque in cinque giorni, vi sono da quaranta ò cinquanta mila persone" (Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309); a confirmation, by the by, of the supposition that the estimated population of the capital, found in the Italian version of this author, is a misprint. (See the preceding chapter, note 13.) He would hardly have crowded an amount equal to the whole of it into the market.

by their size, and, lastly, quills filled with gold dust.[13] Gold was part of the regular currency, it seems, in both hemispheres. In their dealings it is singular that they should have had no knowledge of scales and weights. The quantity was determined by measure and number.[14]

The most perfect order reigned throughout this vast assembly. Officers patrolled the square, whose business it was to keep the peace, to collect the duties imposed on the different articles of merchandise, to see that no false measures or fraud of any kind were used, and to bring offenders at once to justice. A court of twelve judges sat in one part of the *tianguez*, clothed with those ample and summary powers which in despotic countries are often delegated even to petty tribunals. The extreme severity with which they exercised these powers, in more than one instance, proves that they were not a dead letter.[15]

The *tianguez* of Mexico was naturally an object of great interest, as well as wonder, to the Spaniards. For in it they saw converged into one focus, as it were, all the rays of civilization scattered throughout the land. Here they beheld the various evidences of mechanical skill, of domestic industry, the multiplied resources,

[13] [From the description of the coin, Ramirez infers that it was not stamped, but cut, in the form mentioned in the text. This is confirmed by one or two specimens of the kind still preserved in the National Museum at Mexico. Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 102.]

[14] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 148.

[15] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.—Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 104.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10. —Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, loc. cit.

of whatever kind, within the compass of the natives. It could not fail to impress them with high ideas of the magnitude of these resources, as well as of the commercial activity and social subordination by which the whole community was knit together; and their admiration is fully evinced by the minuteness and energy of their descriptions.[16]

From this bustling scene the Spaniards took their way to the great *teocalli*, in the neighborhood of their own quarters. It covered, with the subordinate edifices, as the reader has already seen, the large tract of ground now occupied by the cathedral, part of the market-place, and some of the adjoining streets.[17] It was the spot which had been consecrated to the same object, probably, ever since the foundation of the city. The present building, however, was of no great antiquity, having been constructed by Ahuitzotl, who celebrated its dedication, in 1486, by that hecatomb of victims of which such incredible reports are to be found in the chronicles.[18]

It stood in the midst of a vast area, encompassed by a wall of stone and lime, about eight feet high, ornamented on the outer side by figures of serpents, raised

[16] "There were amongst us," says Diaz, "soldiers who had been in many parts of the world,—in Constantinople and in Rome and through all Italy,—and who said that a market-place so large, so well ordered and regulated, and so filled with people, they had never seen." Hist. de la Conquista, loc. cit.

[17] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 27.

[18] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 83.—[A minute account of the site and extent of the ground covered by the great temple is given by Alaman (Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. pp. 246–248). The Mexicans are largely indebted to this eminent scholar for his elaborate researches into the topography and antiquities of the Aztec capital.]

in relief, which gave it the name of the *coatepantli*, or "wall of serpents." This emblem was a common one in the sacred sculpture of Anahuac, as well as of Egypt. The wall, which was quadrangular, was pierced by huge battlemented gateways, opening on the four principal streets of the capital. Over each of the gates was a kind of arsenal, filled with arms and warlike gear; and, if we may credit the report of the Conquerors, there were barracks adjoining, garrisoned by ten thousand soldiers, who served as a sort of military police for the capital, supplying the emperor with a strong arm in case of tumult or sedition.[19]

The *teocalli* itself was a solid pyramidal structure of earth and pebbles, coated on the outside with hewn stones, probably of the light, porous kind employed in the buildings of the city.[20] It was probably square, with its sides facing the cardinal points.[21] It was

[19] "Et di più v' hauea vna guarnigione di dieci mila huomini di guerra, tutti eletti per huomini valenti, & questi accompagnauano & guardauano la sua persona, & quando si facea qualche rumore ò ribellione nella città ò nel paese circumuicino, andauano questi, ò parte d' essi per Capitani." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[20] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 40.—On paving the square, not long ago, round the modern cathedral, there were found large blocks of sculptured stone buried between thirty and forty feet deep in the ground. Ibid., loc. cit.

[21] Clavigero calls it oblong, on the alleged authority of the "Anonymous Conqueror." (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 27, nota.) But the latter says not a word of the shape, and his contemptible wood-cut is too plainly destitute of all proportion to furnish an inference of any kind. (Comp. Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.) Torquemada and Gomara both say it was square (Monarch. Ind, lib. 8, cap. 11;—Crónica, cap. 80); and Toribio de Benavente, speaking generally of the Mexican temples, says they had that form Hist. de los Ind., MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.

divided into five bodies or stories, each one receding so as to be of smaller dimensions than that immediately below it,—the usual form of the Aztec *teocallis*, as already described, and bearing obvious resemblance to some of the primitive pyramidal structures in the Old World.[22] The ascent was by a flight of steps on the outside, which reached to the narrow terrace or platform at the base of the second story, passing quite round the building, when a second stairway conducted to a similar landing at the base of the third. The breadth of this walk was just so much space as was left by the retreating story next above it. From this construction the visitor was obliged to pass round the whole edifice four times in order to reach the top. This had a most imposing effect in the religious ceremonials, when the pompous procession of priests with their wild minstrelsy came sweeping round the huge sides of the pyramid, as they rose higher and higher, in the presence of gazing multitudes, towards the summit.

The dimensions of the temple cannot be given with any certainty. The Conquerors judged by the eye, rarely troubling themselves with anything like an accurate measurement. It was, probably, not much less than three hundred feet square at the base;[23] and,

[22] See Appendix, Part 1.

[23] Clavigero, calling it oblong, adopts Torquemada's estimate—not Sahagun's, as he pretends, which he never saw, and who gives no measurement of the building—for the length, and Gomara's estimate, which is somewhat less, for the breadth. (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 28, nota.) As both his authorities make the building square, this spirit of accommodation is whimsical enough. Toribio, who did measure a *teocalli* of the usual construction in the town of Tenayuca,

as the Spaniards counted a hundred and fourteen steps, was, probably, less than one hundred feet in height.[24]

When Cortés arrived before the *teocalli*, he found two priests and several caciques commissioned by Montezuma to save him the fatigue of the ascent by bearing him on their shoulders, in the same manner as had been done to the emperor. But the general declined the compliment, preferring to march up at the head of his men. On reaching the summit, they found it a vast area, paved with broad flat stones. The first object that met their view was a large block of jasper, the peculiar shape of which showed it was the stone on which the bodies of the unhappy victims were stretched for sacrifice. Its convex surface, by raising the breast, enabled the priest to perform his diabolical task more easily, of removing the heart. At the other end of the

found it to be forty *brazas*, or two hundred and forty feet, square. (Hist. de los Ind., MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.) The great temple of Mexico was undoubtedly larger, and, in the want of better authorities, one may accept Torquemada, who makes it a little more than three hundred and sixty Toledan, equal to three hundred and eight French feet, square. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 11.) How can M. de Humboldt speak of the "great concurrence of testimony" in regard to the dimensions of the temple? (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 41.) No two authorities agree.

[24] Bernal Diaz says he counted one hundred and fourteen steps. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.) Toribio says that more than one person who had numbered them told him they exceeded a hundred. (Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.) The steps could hardly have been less than eight or ten inches high, each; Clavigero assumes that they were a foot, and that the building, therefore, was a hundred and fourteen feet high, precisely. (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 28, 29.) It is seldom safe to use anything stronger than *probably* in history.

area were two towers or sanctuaries, consisting of three stories, the lower one of stone and stucco, the two upper of wood elaborately carved. In the lower division stood the images of their gods; the apartments above were filled with utensils for their religious services, and with the ashes of some of their Aztec princes, who had fancied this airy sepulchre. Before each sanctuary stood an altar, with that undying fire upon it, the extinction of which boded as much evil to the empire as that of the Vestal flame would have done in ancient Rome. Here, also, was the huge cylindrical drum made of serpents' skins, and struck only on extraordinary occasions, when it sent forth a melancholy sound that might be heard for miles,—a sound of woe in after-times to the Spaniards.

Montezuma, attended by the high-priest, came forward to receive Cortés as he mounted the area. "You are weary, Malinche," said he to him, "with climbing up our great temple." But Cortés, with a politic vaunt, assured him "the Spaniards were never weary"! Then, taking him by the hand, the emperor pointed out the localities of the neighborhood. The temple on which they stood, rising high above all other edifices in the capital, afforded the most elevated as well as central point of view. Below them, the city lay spread out like a map, with its streets and canals intersecting each other at right angles, its terraced roofs blooming like so many parterres of flowers. Every place seemed alive with business and bustle; canoes were glancing up and down the canals, the streets were crowded with people in their gay, picturesque costume, while from the market-place they had so lately left a confused hum of many

sounds and voices rose upon the air.[25] They could distinctly trace the symmetrical plan of the city, with its principal avenues issuing, as it were, from the four gates of the *coatepantli* and connecting themselves with the causeways, which formed the grand entrances to the capital. This regular and beautiful arrangement was imitated in many of the inferior towns, where the great roads converged towards the chief *teocalli*, or cathedral, as to a common focus.[26] They could discern the insular position of the metropolis, bathed on all sides by the salt floods of the Tezcuco, and in the distance the clear fresh waters of the Chalco; far beyond stretched a wide prospect of fields and waving woods, with the burnished walls of many a lofty temple rising high above the trees and crowning the distant hill-tops.[27] The view reached in an unbroken line to the very base of the circular range of mountains, whose

[25] "Tornámos á ver la gran plaça, y la multitud de gente que en ella auia, viños comprado, y otros vendiendo, que solamente el rumor, y zumbido de las vozes, y palabras que allí auia, sonaua mas que de vna legua!" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 92.

[26] "Y por honrar mas sus templos sacaban los caminos muy derechos por cordel de una y de dos leguas que era cosa harto de ver, desde lo Alto del principal templo, como venian de todos los pueblos menores y barrios; salian los caminos muy derechos y iban á dar al patio de los teocallis." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.

[27] "No se contentaba el Demonio con los [Teucales] ya dichos, sino que en cada pueblo, en cada barrio, y á cuarto de legua, tenian otros patios pequeños adonde habia tres ó cuatro teocallis, y en algunos mas, en otras partes solo uno, y en cada Mogote ó Cerrejon uno ó dos, y por los caminos y entre los Maizales, habia otros muchos pequeños, y todos estaban blancos y encalados, que parecian y abultaban mucho, que en la tierra bien poblada parecia que todo estaba lleno de casas, en especial de los patios del Demonio, que eran muy de ver." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., ubi supra.

frosty peaks glittered as if touched with fire in the morning ray; while long, dark wreaths of vapor, rolling up from the hoary head of Popocatepetl, told that the destroying element was, indeed, at work in the bosom of the beautiful Valley.

Cortés was filled with admiration at this grand and glorious spectacle, and gave utterance to his feelings in animated language to the emperor, the lord of these flourishing domains. His thoughts, however, soon took another direction; and, turning to Father Olmedo, who stood by his side, he suggested that the area would afford a most conspicuous position for the Christian Cross, if Montezuma would but allow it to be planted there. But the discreet ecclesiastic, with the good sense which on these occasions seems to have been so lamentably deficient in his commander, reminded him that such a request, at present, would be exceedingly ill timed, as the Indian monarch had shown no dispositions as yet favorable to Christianity.[28]

Cortés then requested Montezuma to allow him to enter the sanctuaries and behold the shrines of his gods. To this the latter, after a short conference with the priests, assented, and conducted the Spaniards into the building. They found themselves in a spacious apartment incrusted on the sides with stucco, on which various figures were sculptured, representing the Mexican calendar, perhaps, or the priestly ritual. At one end of the saloon was a recess with a roof of timber richly carved and gilt. Before the altar in this sanctuary stood the colossal image of Huitzilopochtli, the tutelary deity and war-god of the Aztecs. His coun-

[28] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

tenance was distorted into hideous lineaments of symbolical import. In his right hand he wielded a bow, and in his left a bunch of golden arrows, which a mystic legend had connected with the victories of his people. The huge folds of a serpent, consisting of pearls and precious stones, were coiled round his waist, and the same rich materials were profusely sprinkled over his person. On his left foot were the delicate feathers of the humming-bird, which, singularly enough, gave its name to the dread deity.[29] The most conspicuous ornament was a chain of gold and silver hearts alternate, suspended round his neck, emblematical of the sacrifice in which he most delighted. A more unequivocal evidence of this was afforded by three human hearts smoking and almost palpitating, as if recently torn from the victims, and now lying on the altar before him!

The adjoining sanctuary was dedicated to a milder deity. This was Tezcatlipoca, next in honor to that invisible Being, the Supreme God, who was represented by no image and confined by no temple. It was Tezcatlipoca who created the world and watched over it with a providential care. He was represented as a young man, and his image, of polished black stone, was richly garnished with gold plates and ornaments, among which a shield burnished like a mirror was the most characteristic emblem, as in it he saw reflected all the doings of the world. But the homage to this god was not always of a more refined or merciful character than that paid to his carnivorous brother; for five bleeding hearts were also seen in a golden platter on his altar.

[29] *Ante*, vol. i. p. 59.

The walls of both these chapels were stained with human gore. "The stench was more intolerable," exclaims Diaz, "than that of the slaughter-houses in Castile!" And the frantic forms of the priests, with their dark robes clotted with blood, as they flitted to and fro, seemed to the Spaniards to be those of the very ministers of Satan![30]

From this foul abode they gladly escaped into the open air; when Cortés, turning to Montezuma, said, with a smile, "I do not comprehend how a great and wise prince, like you, can put faith in such evil spirits as these idols, the representatives of the Devil! If you will but permit us to erect here the true Cross, and place the images of the blessed Virgin and her Son in your sanctuaries, you will soon see how your false gods will shrink before them!"

Montezuma was greatly shocked at this sacrilegious address. "These are the gods," he answered, "who have led the Aztecs on to victory since they were a nation, and who send the seed-time and harvest in their seasons. Had I thought you would have offered them this outrage, I would not have admitted you into their presence."

Cortés, after some expressions of concern at having wounded the feelings of the emperor, took his leave. Montezuma remained, saying that he must expiate, if

[30] "Y tenia en las paredes tantas costras de sangre, y el suelo todo bañado dello, que en los mataderos de Castilla no auia tanto hedor." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 105, 106.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—See, also, for notices of these deities, Sahagun, lib. 3, cap. 1, et seq.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 6, cap. 20, 21.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 9.

possible, the crime of exposing the shrines of the divinities to such profanation by the strangers.[31]

On descending to the court, the Spaniards took a leisurely survey of the other edifices in the enclosure. The area was protected by a smooth stone pavement, so polished, indeed, that it was with difficulty the horses could keep their legs. There were several other *teocallis*, built generally on the model of the great one, though of much inferior size, dedicated to the different Aztec deities.[32] On their summits were the altars crowned with perpetual flames, which, with those on the numerous temples in other quarters of the capital, shed a brilliant illumination over its streets through the long nights.[33]

Among the *teocallis* in the enclosure was one consecrated to Quetzalcoatl, circular in its form, and having an entrance in imitation of a dragon's mouth, bristling with sharp fangs and dropping with blood. As the Spaniards cast a furtive glance into the throat of this horrible monster, they saw collected there implements

[31] Bernal Diaz, Ibid., ubi supra.—Whoever examines Cortés' great letter to Charles V. will be surprised to find it stated that, instead of any acknowledgment to Montezuma, he threw down his idols and erected the Christian emblems in their stead. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 106.) This was an event of much later date. The *Conquistador* wrote his despatches too rapidly and concisely to give heed always to exact time and circumstance. We are quite as likely to find them attended to in the long-winded, gossiping,—inestimable chronicle of Diaz.

[32] "Quarenta torres muy altas y bien obradas." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 105.

[33] "Delante de todos estos altares habia braçeros que toda la noche hardian, y en las salas tambien tenian sus fuegos." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.

of sacrifice and other abominations of fearful import. Their bold hearts shuddered at the spectacle, and they designated the place not inaptly as the "Hell."[34]

One other structure may be noticed as characteristic of the brutish nature of their religion. This was a pyramidal mound or tumulus, having a complicated frame-work of timber on its broad summit. On this was strung an immense number of human skulls, which belonged to the victims, mostly prisoners of war, who had perished on the accursed stone of sacrifice. Two of the soldiers had the patience to count the number of these ghastly trophies, and reported it to be one hundred and thirty-six thousand![35] Belief might well

[34] Bernal Diaz, Ibid., ubi supra.—Toribio, also, notices this temple with the same complimentary epithet. "La boca hecha como de infierno y en ella pintada la boca de una temerosa Sierpe con terribles colmillos y dientes, y en algunas de estas los colmillos eran de bulto, que verlo y entrar dentro ponia gran temor y grima, en especial el infierno que estaba en México, que parecia traslado del verdadero infierno." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.

[35] Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.—"Andres de Tapia, *que me lo dijo*, i Gonçalo de Umbria, las contáron vn Dia, i halláron ciento i treinta i seis mil Calaberas, en las Vigas, i Gradas." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 82.*

* [Gomara is so often accused of exaggeration and falsehood that it is satisfactory to find his exactness, in the present instance, established by the evidence of Tápia himself, who thus describes the manner in which the estimate was made: "É quien esto escribe, y un Gonzalo de Umbréa, contaron los palos que habie, é multiplicando á cinco cabezas cada palo de los que entre viga y viga estaban, . . . hallamos haber ciento treinta y seis mill cabezas, *sin las de las torres*." (Icazbalceta, Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. iii.) The original of this "Relacion," recently discovered, is in the library of the Academy of History at Madrid. It is an unfinished narrative, valuable as the production of one of the chief companions of Cortés, and for the confirmation it affords of other contemporaneous accounts of the Conquest.—ED.]

be staggered, did not the Old World present a worthy counterpart in the pyramidal Golgothas which commemorated the triumphs of Tamerlane.[36]

There were long ranges of buildings in the enclosure, appropriated as the residence of the priests and others engaged in the offices of religion. The whole number of them was said to amount to several thousand. Here were, also, the principal seminaries for the instruction of youth of both sexes, drawn chiefly from the higher and wealthier classes. The girls were taught by elderly women who officiated as priestesses in the temples, a custom familiar, also, to Egypt. The Spaniards admit that the greatest care for morals, and the most blameless deportment, were maintained in these institutions. The time of the pupils was chiefly occupied, as in most monastic establishments, with the minute and burdensome ceremonial of their religion. The boys were likewise taught such elements of science as were known to their teachers, and the girls initiated in the mysteries of embroidery and weaving, which they employed in decorating the temples. At a suitable age they generally went forth into the world to assume the occupations fitted to their condition, though some remained permanently devoted to the services of religion.[37]

[36] Three collections, thus fancifully disposed, of these grinning horrors—in all 230,000—are noticed by Gibbon! (Decline and Fall, ed. Milman, vol. i. p. 52; vol. xii. p. 45.) A *European* scholar commends "the conqueror's piety, his moderation, and his justice"! Rowe's Dedication of "Tamerlane."

[37] *Ante*, vol. i. pp. 72, 73.—The desire of presenting the reader with a complete view of the actual state of the capital at the time of its occupation by the Spaniards has led me in this and the preceding chapter into a few repetitions of remarks on the Aztec institutions in the Introductory Book of this History.

The spot was also covered by edifices of a still different character. There were granaries filled with the rich produce of the church-lands and with the first-fruits and other offerings of the faithful. One large mansion was reserved for strangers of eminence who were on a pilgrimage to the great *teocalli*. The enclosure was ornamented with gardens, shaded by ancient trees and watered by fountains and reservoirs from the copious streams of Chapoltepec. The little community was thus provided with almost everything requisite for its own maintenance and the services of the temple.[38]

It was a microcosm of itself, a city within a city, and, according to the assertion of Cortés, embraced a tract of ground large enough for five hundred houses.[39] It presented in this brief compass the extremes of barbarism, blended with a certain civilization, altogether characteristic of the Aztecs. The rude Conquerors saw only the evidence of the former. In the fantastic and symbolical features of the deities they beheld the literal lineaments of Satan; in the rites and frivolous ceremonial, his own especial code of damnation; and in the modest deportment and careful nurture of the inmates of the seminaries, the snares by which he was to beguile his deluded victims![40] Before

[38] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 12.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 80.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 309.

[39] "Es tan grande que dentre del circuito de ella, que es todo cercado de Muro muy alto, se podia muy bien facer una Villa de quinientos Vecinos." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 105.

[40] "Todas estas mugeres," says Father Toribio, "estaban aquí sirviendo al demonio por sus propios intereses; las unas porque el Demonio las hiciese modestas," etc. Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 9.

a century had elapsed, the descendants of these same Spaniards discerned in the mysteries of the Aztec religion the features, obscured and defaced, indeed, of the Jewish and Christian revelations![41] Such were the opposite conclusions of the unlettered soldier and of the scholar. A philosopher, untouched by superstition, might well doubt which of the two was the more extraordinary.

The sight of the Indian abominations seems to have kindled in the Spaniards a livelier feeling for their own religion; since on the following day they asked leave of Montezuma to convert one of the halls in their residence into a chapel, that they might celebrate the services of the Church there. The monarch, in whose bosom the feelings of resentment seem to have soon subsided, easily granted their request, and sent some of his own artisans to aid them in the work.

While it was in progress, some of the Spaniards observed what appeared to be a door recently plastered over. It was a common rumor that Montezuma still kept the treasures of his father, King Axayacatl, in this ancient palace. The Spaniards, acquainted with this fact, felt no scruple in gratifying their curiosity by removing the plaster. As was anticipated, it concealed a door. On forcing this, they found the rumor was no exaggeration. They beheld a large hall filled with rich and beautiful stuffs, articles of curious workmanship of various kinds, gold and silver in bars and in the ore, and many jewels of value. It was the private hoard of Montezuma, the contributions, it may be, of tributary cities, and once the property of his father. "I

[41] See Appendix, Part I.

was a young man," says Diaz, who was one of those that obtained a sight of it, "and it seemed to me as if all the riches of the world were in that room!"[42] The Spaniards, notwithstanding their elation at the discovery of this precious deposit, seem to have felt some commendable scruples as to appropriating it to their own use,—at least for the present. And Cortés, after closing up the wall as it was before, gave strict injunctions that nothing should be said of the matter, unwilling that the knowledge of its existence by his guests should reach the ears of Montezuma.

Three days sufficed to complete the chapel; and the Christians had the satisfaction to see themselves in possession of a temple where they might worship God in their own way, under the protection of the Cross and the blessed Virgin. Mass was regularly performed by the fathers Olmedo and Diaz, in the presence of the assembled army, who were most earnest and exemplary in their devotions, partly, says the chronicler above quoted, from the propriety of the thing, and partly for its edifying influence on the benighted heathen.[43]

[42] "Y luego lo supímos entre todos los demas Capitanes, y soldados, y lo entrámos á ver muy secretamente, y como yo lo ví, digo que me admiré, é como en aquel tiempo era mancebo, y no auia visto en mi vida riquezas como aquellas, tuue por cierto, que en el mundo no deuiera auer otras tantas!" Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 93.

[43] Ibid., loc. cit.

CHAPTER III.

ANXIETY OF CORTÉS.—SEIZURE OF MONTEZUMA.—HIS TREATMENT BY THE SPANIARDS.—EXECUTION OF HIS OFFICERS.—MONTEZUMA IN IRONS.—REFLECTIONS.

1519.

THE Spaniards had been now a week in Mexico. During this time they had experienced the most friendly treatment from the emperor. But the mind of Cortés was far from easy. He felt that it was quite uncertain how long this amiable temper would last. A hundred circumstances might occur to change it. Montezuma might very naturally feel the maintenance of so large a body too burdensome on his treasury. The people of the capital might become dissatisfied at the presence of so numerous an armed force within their walls. Many causes of disgust might arise betwixt the soldiers and the citizens. Indeed, it was scarcely possible that a rude, licentious soldiery, like the Spaniards, could be long kept in subjection without active employment.[1] The danger was even greater with the Tlascalans, a fierce race now brought into daily contact with the nation who held them in loathing and detestation. Rumors were already rife among the allies, whether

[1] "We Spaniards," says Cortés, frankly, "are apt to be somewhat unmanageable and troublesome." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 84.

well founded or not, of murmurs among the Mexicans, accompanied by menaces of raising the bridges.[a]

Even should the Spaniards be allowed to occupy their present quarters unmolested, it was not advancing the great object of the expedition. Cortés was not a whit nearer gaining the capital, so essential to his meditated subjugation of the country; and any day he might receive tidings that the crown, or, what he most feared, the governor of Cuba, had sent a force of superior strength to wrest from him a conquest but half achieved. Disturbed by these anxious reflections, he resolved to extricate himself from his embarrassment by one bold stroke. But he first submitted the affair to a council of the officers in whom he most confided, desirous to divide with them the responsibility of the act, and, no doubt, to interest them more heartily in its execution by making it in some measure the result of their combined judgments.

When the general had briefly stated the embarrassments of their position, the council was divided in opinion. All admitted the necessity of some instant action. One party were for retiring secretly from the city, and getting beyond the causeways before their march could be intercepted. Another advised that it

[a] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 83.—There is reason to doubt the truth of these stories. "Segun una carta original que tengo en mi poder firmada de las tres cabezas de la Nueva-España en donde escriben á la Magestad del Emperador Nuestro Señor (que Dios tenga en su Santo Reyno) disculpan en ella á Motecuhzoma y á los Mexicanos de esto, y de lo demas que se les argulló, que lo cierto era que fué invencion de los Tlascaltecas, y de algunos de los Españoles que veian la hora de salirse de miedo de la Ciudad, y poner en cobro innumerables riquezas que habian venido á sus manos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

should be done openly, with the knowledge of the emperor, of whose good will they had had so many proofs. But both these measures seemed alike impolitic. A retreat under these circumstances, and so abruptly made, would have the air of a flight. It would be construed into distrust of themselves; and anything like timidity on their part would be sure not only to bring on them the Mexicans, but the contempt of their allies, who would, doubtless, join in the general cry.

As to Montezuma, what reliance could they place on the protection of a prince so recently their enemy, and who, in his altered bearing, must have taken counsel of his fears rather than his inclinations?

Even should they succeed in reaching the coast, their situation would be little better. It would be proclaiming to the world that, after all their lofty vaunts, they were unequal to the enterprise. Their only hopes of their sovereign's favor, and of pardon for their irregular proceedings, were founded on success. Hitherto, they had only made the discovery of Mexico; to retreat would be to leave conquest and the fruits of it to another. In short, to stay and to retreat seemed equally disastrous.

In this perplexity, Cortés proposed an expedient which none but the most daring spirit, in the most desperate extremity, would have conceived. This was to march to the royal palace and bring Montezuma to the Spanish quarters, by fair means if they could persuade him, by force if necessary,—at all events, to get possession of his person. With such a pledge, the Spaniards would be secure from the assault of the Mexicans, afraid by acts of violence to compromise

the safety of their prince. If he came by his own consent, they would be deprived of all apology for doing so. As long as the emperor remained among the Spaniards, it would be easy, by allowing him a show of sovereignty, to rule in his name, until they had taken measures for securing their safety and the success of their enterprise. The idea of employing a sovereign as a tool for the government of his own kingdom, if a new one in the age of Cortés, is certainly not so in ours.[3]

A plausible pretext for the seizure of the hospitable monarch—for the most barefaced action seeks to veil itself under some show of decency—was afforded by a circumstance of which Cortés had received intelligence

[3] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 84.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6.—Bernal Diaz gives a very different report of this matter. According to him, a number of officers and soldiers, of whom he was one, suggested the capture of Montezuma to the general, who came into the plan with hesitation. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 93.) This is contrary to the character of Cortés, who was a man to lead, not to be led, on such occasions. It is contrary to the general report of historians, though these, it must be confessed, are mainly built on the general's narrative. It is contrary to anterior probability; since, if the conception seems almost too desperate to have seriously entered into the head of any one man, how much more improbable is it that it should have originated with a number! Lastly, it is contrary to the positive written statement of Cortés to the emperor, publicly known and circulated, confirmed in print by his chaplain, Gomara, and all this when the thing was fresh and when the parties interested were alive to contradict it. We cannot but think that the captain here, as in the case of the burning of the ships, assumes rather more for himself and his comrades than the facts will strictly warrant; an oversight for which the lapse of half a century—to say nothing of his avowed anxiety to show up the claims of the latter—may furnish some apology.

at Cholula.[4] He had left, as we have seen, a faithful officer, Juan de Escalante, with a hundred and fifty men, in garrison at Vera Cruz, on his departure for the capital He had not been long absent when his lieutant received a message from an Aztec chief named Quauhpopoca, governor of a district to the north of the Spanish settlement, declaring his desire to come in person and tender his allegiance to the Spanish authorities at Vera Cruz. He requested that four of the white men might be sent to protect him against certain unfriendly tribes through which his road lay. This was not an uncommon request, and excited no suspicion in Escalante. The four soldiers were sent; and on their arrival two of them were murdered by the false Aztec. The other two made their way back to the garrison.[5]

The commander marched at once, with fifty of his men, and several thousand Indian allies, to take vengeance on the cacique. A pitched battle followed. The allies fled from the redoubted Mexicans. The few Spaniards stood firm, and with the aid of their fire-arms and the blessed Virgin, who was distinctly seen hovering over their ranks in the van, they made good the field against the enemy. It cost them dear, however;

4 Even Gomara has the candor to style it a "pretext,"—*achaque.* Crónica, cap. 83.

5 Bernal Diaz states the affair, also, differently. According to him, the Aztec governor was enforcing the payment of the customary tribute from the Totonacs, when Escalante, interfering to protect his allies, now subjects of Spain, was slain in an action with the enemy. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 93.) Cortés had the best means of knowing the facts, and wrote at the time. He does not usually shrink from avowing his policy, however severe, towards the natives; and I have thought it fair to give him the benefit of his own version of the story.

since seven or eight Christians were slain, and among them the gallant Escalante himself, who died of his injuries soon after his return to the fort. The Indian prisoners captured in the battle spoke of the whole proceeding as having taken place at the instigation of Montezuma.[6]

One of the Spaniards fell into the hands of the natives, but soon after perished of his wounds. His head was cut off and sent to the Aztec emperor. It was uncommonly large and covered with hair; and, as Montezuma gazed on the ferocious features, rendered more horrible by death, he seemed to read in them the dark lineaments of the destined destroyers of his house. He turned from it with a shudder, and commanded that it should be taken from the city, and not offered at the shrine of any of his gods.

Although Cortés had received intelligence of this disaster at Cholula, he had concealed it within his own breast, or communicated it to very few only of his most trusty officers, from apprehension of the ill effect it might have on the spirits of the common soldiers.

The cavaliers whom Cortés now summoned to the council were men of the same mettle with their leader. Their bold, chivalrous spirits seemed to court danger for its own sake. If one or two, less adventurous, were

[6] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 5.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 83, 84.—The apparition of the Virgin was seen only by the Aztecs, who, it is true, had to make out the best case for their defeat they could to Montezuma; a suspicious circumstance, which, however, did not stagger the Spaniards. "Assuredly all of us soldiers who accompanied Cortés held the belief that the divine mercy and Our Lady the Virgin Mary were always with us, and this was the truth." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 94.

startled by the proposal he made, they were soon overruled by the others, who, no doubt, considered that a desperate disease required as desperate a remedy.

That night Cortés was heard pacing his apartment to and fro, like a man oppressed by thought or agitated by strong emotion. He may have been ripening in his mind the daring scheme for the morrow.[7] In the morning the soldiers heard mass as usual, and Father Olmedo invoked the blessing of Heaven on their hazardous enterprise. Whatever might be the cause in which he was embarked, the heart of the Spaniard was cheered with the conviction that the saints were on his side![8]

Having asked an audience from Montezuma, which was readily granted, the general made the necessary arrangements for his enterprise. The principal part of his force was drawn up in the court-yard, and he stationed a considerable detachment in the avenues leading to the palace, to check any attempt at rescue by the populace. He ordered twenty-five or thirty of the soldiers to drop in at the palace, as if by accident, in groups of three or four at a time, while the conference was going on with Montezuma. He selected five cavaliers, in whose courage and coolness he placed most trust, to bear him company; Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, Francisco de Lujo, Velasquez de Leon, and Alonso de Avila,—brilliant names in the

[7] "Paseóse vn gran rato solo, i cuidadosó de aquel gran hecho, que emprendia, i que aun á él mesmo le parecia temerario, pero necesario para su intento, andando." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 83.

[8] Diaz says, "All that night we spent in prayer, beseeching the Father of Mercies that he would so direct the matter that it should contribute to his holy service." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.

annals of the Conquest. All were clad, as well as the common soldiers, in complete armor, a circumstance of too familiar occurrence to excite suspicion.

The little party were graciously received by the emperor, who soon, with the aid of the interpreters, became interested in a sportive conversation with the Spaniards, while he indulged his natural munificence by giving them presents of gold and jewels. He paid the Spanish general the particular compliment of offering him one of his daughters as his wife; an honor which the latter respectfully declined, on the ground that he was already accommodated with one in Cuba, and that his religion forbade a plurality.

When Cortés perceived that a sufficient number of his soldiers were assembled, he changed his playful manner, and in a serious tone briefly acquainted Montezuma with the treacherous proceedings in the *tierra caliente*, and the accusation of him as their author. The emperor listened to the charge with surprise, and disavowed the act, which he said could only have been imputed to him by his enemies. Cortés expressed his belief in his declaration, but added that, to prove it true, it would be necessary to send for Quauhpopoca and his accomplices, that they might be examined and dealt with according to their deserts. To this Montezuma made no objection. Taking from his wrist, to which it was attached, a precious stone, the royal signet, on which was cut the figure of the War-god,[9] he gave it to one of his nobles, with orders to show it to the

[9] According to Ixtlilxochitl, it was his own portrait. "Se quitó del brazo una rica piedra, donde está esculpido su rostro (que era lo mismo que un sello Real)." Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

Aztec governor, and require his instant presence in the capital, together with all those who had been accessory to the murder of the Spaniards. If he resisted, the officer was empowered to call in the aid of the neighboring towns to enforce the mandate.

When the messenger had gone, Cortés assured the monarch that this prompt compliance with his request convinced him of his innocence. But it was important that his own sovereign should be equally convinced of it. Nothing would promote this so much as for Montezuma to transfer his residence to the palace occupied by the Spaniards, till on the arrival of Quauhpopoca the affair could be fully investigated. Such an act of condescension would, of itself, show a personal regard for the Spaniards, incompatible with the base conduct alleged against him, and would fully absolve him from all suspicion![10]

Montezuma listened to this proposal, and the flimsy reasoning with which it was covered, with looks of profound amazement. He became pale as death; but in a moment his face flushed with resentment, as, with the pride of offended dignity, he exclaimed, "When was it ever heard that a great prince, like myself, voluntarily left his own palace to become a prisoner in the hands of strangers!"

Cortés assured him he would not go as a prisoner. He would experience nothing but respectful treatment from the Spaniards, would be surrounded by his own household, and hold intercourse with his people as usual. In short, it would be but a change of residence, from one of his palaces to another, a circumstance of

[10] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 86.

frequent occurrence with him. It was in vain. "If I should consent to such a degradation," he answered, "my subjects never would!"[11] When further pressed, he offered to give up one of his sons and two of his daughters to remain as hostages with the Spaniards, so that he might be spared this disgrace.

Two hours passed in this fruitless discussion, till a high-mettled cavalier, Velasquez de Leon, impatient of the long delay, and seeing that the attempt, if not the deed, must ruin them, cried out, "Why do we waste words on this barbarian? We have gone too far to recede now. Let us seize him, and, if he resists, plunge our swords into his body!"[12] The fierce tone and menacing gestures with which this was uttered alarmed the monarch, who inquired of Marina what the angry Spaniard said. The interpreter explained it in as gentle a manner as she could, beseeching him "to accompany the white men to their quarters, where he would be treated with all respect and kindness, while to refuse them would but expose himself to violence, perhaps to death." Marina, doubtless, spoke to her sovereign as she thought, and no one had better opportunity of knowing the truth than herself.

This last appeal shook the resolution of Montezuma. It was in vain that the unhappy prince looked around for sympathy or support. As his eyes wandered over

[11] "Quando Io lo consintiera, los mios no pasarian por ello." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85.

[12] "¿Que haze v. m. ya con tantas palabras? O le lleuemos preso, ó le darémos de estocadas, por esso tornadle á dezir, que si da vozes, ó haze alboroto, que le mataréis, porque mas vale que desta vez aseguremos nuestras vidas, ó las perdamos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.

the stern visages and iron forms of the Spaniards, he felt that his hour was indeed come; and, with a voice scarcely audible from emotion, he consented to accompany the strangers,—to quit the palace, whither he was never more to return. Had he possessed the spirit of the first Montezuma, he would have called his guards around him, and left his life-blood on the threshold, sooner than have been dragged a dishonored captive across it. But his courage sank under circumstances. He felt he was the instrument of an irresistible Fate![13]

No sooner had the Spaniards got his consent, than orders were given for the royal litter. The nobles who bore and attended it could scarcely believe their senses when they learned their master's purpose. But pride now came to Montezuma's aid, and, since he must go, he preferred that it should appear to be with his own free will. As the royal retinue, escorted by the Spaniards, marched through the street with downcast eyes and dejected mien, the people assembled in crowds, and a rumor ran among them that the emperor was carried off by force to the quarters of the white men. A tumult would have soon arisen but for the

[13] Oviedo has some doubts whether Montezuma's conduct is to be viewed as pusillanimous or as prudent. "Al coronista le parece, segun lo que se puede colegir de esta materia, que Montezuma era, ó mui falto de ánimo, ó pusilánimo, ó mui prudente, aunque en muchas cosas, los que le viéron lo loan de mui señor y mui liberal; y en sus razonamientos mostraba ser de buen juicio." He strikes the balance, however, in favor of pusillanimity. "Un Príncipe tan grande como Montezuma no se habia de dexar incurrir en tales términos, ni consentir ser detenido de tan poco número de Españoles, ni de otra generacion alguna; mas como Dios tiene ordenado lo que ha de ser, ninguno puede huir de su juicio." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6.

intervention of Montezuma himself, who called out to the people to disperse, as he was visiting his friends of his own accord; thus sealing his ignominy by a declaration which deprived his subjects of the only excuse for resistance. On reaching the quarters, he sent out his nobles with similar assurances to the mob, and renewed orders to return to their homes.[14]

He was received with ostentatious respect by the Spaniards, and selected the suite of apartments which best pleased him. They were soon furnished with fine cotton tapestries, feather-work, and all the elegancies of Indian upholstery. He was attended by such of his household as he chose, his wives and his pages, and was served with his usual pomp and luxury at his meals.* He gave audience, as in his own palace, to his subjects, who were admitted to his presence, few, indeed, at a time, under the pretext of greater order and decorum. From the Spaniards themselves he met

[14] The story of the seizure of Montezuma may be found, with the usual discrepancies in the details, in Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 84–86,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 85,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 83,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 2, 3,—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

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* [According to Tápia, his servants brought him at each meal more than four hundred dishes of meat, game, and fish, intermingled with vegetables and fruits: "é debajo de cada plato de los que á sus servidores les parecie que él comerie, venia un braserico con lumbre; . . . siempre le traian platos nuevos en que comie, é jamas comie en cada plato mas de una vez, ni se vistie ropa mas de una vez; é lavábase el cuerpo cada dia dos veces." Icazbalceta, Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. ii.—ED.]

with a formal deference. No one, not even the general himself, approached him without doffing his casque and rendering the obeisance due to his rank. Nor did they ever sit in his presence, without being invited by him to do so.[15]

With all this studied ceremony and show of homage, there was one circumstance which too clearly proclaimed to his people that their sovereign was a prisoner. In the front of the palace a patrol of sixty men was established, and the same number in the rear. Twenty of each corps mounted guard at once, maintaining a careful watch, day and night.[16] Another body, under command of Velasquez de Leon, was stationed in the royal antechamber. Cortés punished any departure from duty, or relaxation of vigilance, in these sentinels, with the utmost severity.[17] He felt, as indeed every Spaniard must have felt, that the escape of the emperor now would be their ruin. Yet the task of this unintermitting watch sorely added to their fatigues. "Better this dog of a king should die," cried a soldier one day, "than that we should wear out our lives in this manner." The words were uttered in the hearing of Montezuma, who gathered something of their import, and the offender was severely chastised

[15] "Siempre que ante él passauamos, y aunque fuesse Cortés, le quitauamos los bonetes de armas ó cascos, que siempre estauamos armados, y él nos hazia gran mesura, y honra á todos. . . . Digo que no se sentauan Cortés, ni ningun Capitan, hasta que el Montezuma les mandaua dar sus assentaderos ricos, y les mandaua assentar." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95, 100.

[16] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 3.

[17] On one occasion, three soldiers, who left their posts without orders, were sentenced to run the gauntlet,—a punishment little short of death. Ibid., ubi supra.

by order of the general.[18] Such instances of disrespect, however, were very rare. Indeed, the amiable deportment of the monarch, who seemed to take pleasure in the society of his jailers, and who never allowed a favor or attention from the meanest soldier to go unrequited, inspired the Spaniards with as much attachment as they were capable of feeling—for a barbarian.[19]

Things were in this posture, when the arrival of Quauhpopoca from the coast was announced. He was accompanied by his son and fifteen Aztec chiefs. He had travelled all the way, borne, as became his high rank, in a litter. On entering Montezuma's presence, he threw over his dress the coarse robe of *nequen*, and made the usual humiliating acts of obeisance. The poor parade of courtly ceremony was the more striking

[18] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 97.

[19] [The patriotic sensibilities of Señor Ramirez are somewhat disturbed by my application of the term *barbarians* to his Aztec countrymen.* This word, with the corresponding epithet of *savages*, forms the key, he seems to think, to my descriptions of the ancient Mexicans. "Regarded from this point of view," he says, "the astounding examples of heroism and self-devotion so rarely met with in the history of the world are interpreted not as a voluntary sacrifice inspired by the holy love of country and of freedom, but as the effect of a brutish hatred and stupid ferocity." There may be some foundation for these strictures, though somewhat too highly colored. And one cannot deny that, as he reflects on the progress made by the Aztecs in the knowledge of the useful arts, and, indeed, to a certain extent, of science, he must admit their claim to a higher place in the scale of civilization than that occupied by barbarians,—to one, in truth, occu-

* [This sensibility is the more natural that Señor Ramirez claims descent not from the conquering but from the conquered race,—a fact which may also account for his rigorous judgments on the acts and character of Cortés.—ED.]

when placed in contrast with the actual condition of the parties.

The Aztec governor was coldly received by his master, who referred the affair (had he the power to do otherwise?) to the examination of Cortés. It was, doubtless, conducted in a sufficiently summary manner. To the general's query, whether the cacique was the subject of Montezuma, he replied, "And what other sovereign could I serve?" implying that his sway was universal.[20] He did not deny his share in the transaction, nor did he seek to shelter himself under the royal authority till sentence of death was passed on him and his followers, when they all laid the blame of their proceedings on Montezuma.[21] They were condemned to be burnt alive in the area before the palace. The funeral piles were made of heaps of arrows, javelins, and other weapons, drawn by the emperor's permission from the arsenals round the great *teocalli*, where they had been stored to supply means of defence in times of civic tumult or insurrection. By this politic precaution Cortés proposed to remove a ready means of annoyance in case of hostilities with the citizens.

pied by the semi-civilized races of China and Hindostan. But there is another side of the picture, not presented by the Eastern nations, in those loathsome abominations which degraded the Aztec character to a level with the lowest stages of humanity, and makes even the term *barbarian* inadequate to express the ferocity of his nature.]

[20] "Y despues que confesáron haber muerto los Españoles, les hice nterrogar si ellos eran Vasallos de Muteczuma? Y el dicho Qualpopoca respondió, que si habia otro Señor, de quien pudiesse serlo? casi diciendo, que no habia otro, y que si eran." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 87.

[21] "É assimismo les pregunte, si lo que allí se habia hecho si habia

To crown the whole of these extraordinary proceedings, Cortés, while preparations for the execution were going on, entered the emperor's apartment, attended by a soldier bearing fetters in his hands. With a severe aspect, he charged the monarch with being the original contriver of the violence offered to the Spaniards, as was now proved by the declaration of his own instruments. Such a crime, which merited death in a subject, could not be atoned for, even by a sovereign, without some punishment. So saying, he ordered the soldier to fasten the fetters on Montezuma's ankles. He coolly waited till it was done, then, turning his back on the monarch, quitted the room.

Montezuma was speechless under the infliction of this last insult. He was like one struck down by a heavy blow, that deprives him of all his faculties. He offered no resistance. But, though he spoke not a word, low, ill-suppressed moans, from time to time, intimated the anguish of his spirit. His attendants, bathed in tears, offered him their consolations. They tenderly held his feet in their arms, and endeavored, by inserting their shawls and mantles, to relieve them from the pressure of the iron. But they could not reach the iron which had penetrated into his soul. He felt that he was no more a king.

Meanwhile, the execution of the dreadful doom was going forward in the court-yard. The whole Spanish force was under arms, to check any interruption that

sido por su mandado? y dijéron que no, aunque despues, al tiempo que en ellos se executó la sentencia, que fuessen quemados, todos á una voz dijéron, que era verdad que el dicho Muteczuma se lo habia embiado á mandar, y que por su mandado lo habian hecho." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, loc. cit.

might be offered by the Mexicans. But none was attempted. The populace gazed in silent wonder, regarding it as the sentence of the emperor. The manner of the execution, too, excited less surprise, from their familiarity with similar spectacles, aggravated, indeed, by additional horrors, in their own diabolical sacrifices. The Aztec lord and his companions, bound hand and foot to the blazing piles, submitted without a cry or a complaint to their terrible fate. Passive fortitude is the virtue of the Indian warrior; and it was the glory of the Aztec, as of the other races on the North American continent, to show how the spirit of the brave man may triumph over torture and the agonies of death.

When the dismal tragedy was ended, Cortés reentered Montezuma's apartment. Kneeling down, he unclasped his shackles with his own hand, expressing at the same time his regret that so disagreeable a duty as that of subjecting him to such a punishment had been imposed on him. This last indignity had entirely crushed the spirit of Montezuma; and the monarch whose frown, but a week since, would have made the nations of Anahuac tremble to their remotest borders, was now craven enough to thank his deliverer for his freedom, as for a great and unmerited boon![22]

Not long after, the Spanish general, conceiving that his royal captive was sufficiently humbled, expressed his willingness that he should return, if he inclined, to

[22] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 89.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 6.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.—One may doubt whether pity or contempt predominates in Martyr's notice of this event. "Infelix tunc Muteczuma re adeo noua perculsus,

his own palace. Montezuma declined it; alleging, it is said, that his nobles had more than once importuned him to resent his injuries by taking arms against the Spaniards, and that, were he in the midst of them, it would be difficult to avoid it, or to save his capital from bloodshed and anarchy.[23] The reason did honor to his heart, if it was the one which influenced him. It is probable that he did not care to trust his safety to those haughty and ferocious chieftains, who had witnessed the degradation of their master, and must despise his pusillanimity, as a thing unprecedented in an Aztec monarch. It is also said that, when Marina conveyed to him the permission of Cortés, the other interpreter, Aguilar, gave him to understand the Spanish officers never would consent that he should avail himself of it.[24]

Whatever were his reasons, it is certain that he declined the offer; and the general, in a well-feigned or real ecstasy, embraced him, declaring "that he loved him as a brother, and that every Spaniard would be zealously devoted to his interests, since he had shown himself so mindful of theirs!" Honeyed words, "which," says the shrewd old chronicler who was present, "Montezuma was wise enough to know the worth of."

formidine repletur, decidit animo, neque iam erigere caput audet, aut suorum auxilia implorare. Ille vero pœnam se meruisse fassus est, vti agnus mitis. Æquo animo pati videtur has regulas grammaticalibus duriores, imberbibus pueris dictatas, omnia placide fert, ne seditio ciuium et procerum oriatur." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

[23] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 18.

[24] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

The events recorded in this chapter are certainly some of the most extraordinary on the page of history. That a small body of men, like the Spaniards, should have entered the palace of a mighty prince, have seized his person in the midst of his vassals, have borne him off a captive to their quarters,—that they should have put to an ignominious death before his face his high officers, for executing, probably, his own commands, and have crowned the whole by putting the monarch in irons like a common malefactor,—that this should have been done, not to a drivelling dotard in the decay of his fortunes, but to a proud monarch in the plenitude of his power, in the very heart of his capital, surrounded by thousands and tens of thousands, who trembled at his nod and would have poured out their blood like water in his defence,—that all this should have been done by a mere handful of adventurers, is a thing too extravagant, altogether too improbable, for the pages of romance! It is, nevertheless, literally true. Yet we shall not be prepared to acquiesce in the judgments of contemporaries who regarded these acts with admiration. We may well distrust any grounds on which it is attempted to justify the kidnapping of a friendly sovereign,—by those very persons, too, who were reaping the full benefit of his favors.

To view the matter differently, we must take the position of the Conquerors and assume with them the original right of conquest. Regarded from this point of view, many difficulties vanish. If conquest were a duty, whatever was necessary to effect it was right also. Right and expedient become convertible terms. And it can hardly be denied that the capture of the

monarch was expedient, if the Spaniards would maintain their hold on the empire.[25]

The execution of the Aztec governor suggests other considerations. If he were really guilty of the perfidious act imputed to him by Cortés, and if Montezuma disavowed it, the governor deserved death, and the general was justified by the law of nations in inflicting it.[26] It is by no means so clear, however, why he should have involved so many in this sentence; most, perhaps all, of whom must have acted under his authority. The cruel manner of the death will less startle those who are familiar with the established penal codes in most civilized nations in the sixteenth century.

But, if the governor deserved death, what pretence was there for the outrage on the person of Montezuma? If the former was guilty, the latter surely was not. But, if the cacique only acted in obedience to orders, the responsibility was transferred to the sovereign who gave the orders. They could not both stand in the same category.

It is vain, however, to reason on the matter on any abstract principles of right and wrong, or to suppose that the Conquerors troubled themselves with the re-

[25] Archbishop Lorenzana, as late as the close of the last century, finds good Scripture warrant for the proceeding of the Spaniards. "Fué grande prudencia, y Arte militar haber asegurado á el Emperador, porque sino quedaban expuestos Hernan Cortés, y sus soldados á perecer á traycion, y teniendo seguro á el Emperador se aseguraba á sí mismo, pues los Españoles no se confian ligeramente: Jonathas fué muerto, y sorprendido por haberse confiado de Triphon." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, p. 84, nota.

[26] See Puffendorf, De Jure Naturæ et Gentium, lib. 8, cap. 6, sec. 10.—Vattel, Law of Nations, book 3, chap. 8, sec. 141.

finements of casuistry. Their standard of right and wrong, in reference to the natives, was a very simple one. Despising them as an outlawed race, without God in the world, they, in common with their age, held it to be their "mission" (to borrow the cant phrase of our own day) to conquer and to convert. The measures they adopted certainly facilitated the first great work of conquest. By the execution of the caciques they struck terror not only into the capital, but throughout the country. It proclaimed that not a hair of a Spaniard was to be touched with impunity! By rendering Montezuma contemptible in his own eyes and those of his subjects, Cortés deprived him of the support of his people and forced him to lean on the arm of the stranger. It was a politic proceeding,—to which few men could have been equal who had a touch of humanity in their natures.

A good criterion of the moral sense of the actors in these events is afforded by the reflections of Bernal Diaz, made some fifty years, it will be remembered, after the events themselves, when the fire of youth had become extinct, and the eye, glancing back through the vista of half a century, might be supposed to be unclouded by the passions and prejudices which throw their mist over the present. "Now that I am an old man," says the veteran, "I often entertain myself with calling to mind the heroical deeds of early days, till they are as fresh as the events of yesterday. I think of the seizure of the Indian monarch, his confinement in irons, and the execution of his officers, till all these things seem actually passing before me. And, as I ponder on our exploits, I feel that it was not of our-

selves that we performed them, but that it was the providence of God which guided us. Much food is there here for meditation!"[27] There is so, indeed, and for a meditation not unpleasing, as we reflect on the advance, in speculative morality at least, which the nineteenth century has made over the sixteenth. But should not the consciousness of this teach us charity? Should it not make us the more distrustful of applying the standard of the present to measure the actions of the past?

[27] "Osar quemar sus Capitanes delante de sus Palacios, y echalle grillos entre tanto que se hazia la Justicia, que muchas vezes aora que soy viejo me paro á considerar las cosas heroicas que en aquel tiempo passámos, que me parece las veo presentes: Y digo que nuestros hechos, que no los haziamos nosotros, sino que venian todos encaminados por Dios. . . . Porque ay mucho que ponderar en ello." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 95.

CHAPTER IV.

MONTEZUMA'S DEPORTMENT.—HIS LIFE IN THE SPANISH QUARTERS.—MEDITATED INSURRECTION.—LORD OF TEZCUCO SEIZED.—FURTHER MEASURES OF CORTÉS.

1520.

THE settlement of La Villa Rica de Vera Cruz was of the last importance to the Spaniards. It was the port by which they were to communicate with Spain; the strong post on which they were to retreat in case of disaster, and which was to bridle their enemies and give security to their allies; the *point d'appui* for all their operations in the country. It was of great moment, therefore, that the care of it should be intrusted to proper hands.

A cavalier, named Alonso de Grado, had been sent by Cortés to take the place made vacant by the death of Escalante. He was a person of greater repute in civil than military matters, and would be more likely, it was thought, to maintain peaceful relations with the natives than a person of more belligerent spirit. Cortés made—what was rare with him—a bad choice. He soon received such accounts of troubles in the settlement from the exactions and negligence of the new governor, that he resolved to supersede him.

He now gave the command to Gonzalo de Sandoval, a young cavalier, who had displayed, through the whole

campaign, singular intrepidity united with sagacity and discretion; while the good humor with which he bore every privation, and his affable manners, made him a favorite with all, privates as well as officers. Sandoval accordingly left the camp for the coast. Cortés did not mistake his man a second time.

Notwithstanding the actual control exercised by the Spaniards through their royal captive, Cortés felt some uneasiness when he reflected that it was in the power of the Indians at any time to cut off his communications with the surrounding country and hold him a prisoner in the capital. He proposed, therefore, to build two vessels of sufficient size to transport his forces across the lake, and thus to render himself independent of the causeways. Montezuma was pleased with the idea of seeing those wonderful "water-houses," of which he had heard so much, and readily gave permission to have the timber in the royal forests felled for the purpose. The work was placed under the direction of Martin Lopez, an experienced ship-builder. Orders were also given to Sandoval to send up from the coast a supply of cordage, sails, iron, and other necessary materials, which had been judiciously saved on the destruction of the fleet.[1]

The Aztec emperor, meanwhile, was passing his days in the Spanish quarters in no very different manner from what he had been accustomed to in his own palace. His keepers were too well aware of the value of their prize, not to do everything which could make his captivity comfortable and disguise it from himself. But the chain will gall, though wreathed with roses. After

[1] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 96.

Montezuma's breakfast, which was a light meal of fruits or vegetables, Cortés or some of his officers usually waited on him, to learn if he had any commands for them. He then devoted some time to business. He gave audience to those of his subjects who had petitions to prefer or suits to settle. The statement of the party was drawn up on the hieroglyphic scrolls, which were submitted to a number of counsellors or judges, who assisted him with their advice on these occasions. Envoys from foreign states or his own remote provinces and cities were also admitted, and the Spaniards were careful that the same precise and punctilious etiquette should be maintained towards the royal puppet as when in the plenitude of his authority.

After business was despatched, Montezuma often amused himself with seeing the Castilian troops go through their military exercises. He, too, had been a soldier, and in his prouder days had led armies in the field. It was very natural he should take an interest in the novel display of European tactics and discipline. At other times he would challenge Cortés or his officers to play at some of the national games. A favorite one was called *totoloque*, played with golden balls aimed at a target or mark of the same metal. Montezuma usually staked something of value,—precious stones or ingots of gold. He lost with good humor; indeed, it was of little consequence whether he won or lost, since he generally gave away his winnings to his attendants.[a] He had, in truth, a most munificent spirit. His enemies accused him of avarice. But, if he were

[a] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 97.

avaricious, it could have been only that he might have the more to give away.

Each of the Spaniards had several Mexicans, male and female, who attended to his cooking and various other personal offices. Cortés, considering that the maintenance of this host of menials was a heavy tax on the royal exchequer, ordered them to be dismissed, excepting one to be retained for each soldier. Montezuma, on learning this, pleasantly remonstrated with the general on his careful economy, as unbecoming a royal establishment, and, countermanding the order, caused additional accommodations to be provided for the attendants, and their pay to be doubled.

On another occasion, a soldier purloined some trinkets of gold from the treasure kept in the chamber, which, since Montezuma's arrival in the Spanish quarters, had been reopened. Cortés would have punished the man for the theft, but the emperor, interfering, said to him, "Your countrymen are welcome to the gold and other articles, if you will but spare those belonging to the gods." Some of the soldiers, making the most of his permission, carried off several hundred loads of fine cotton to their quarters. When this was represented to Montezuma, he only replied, "What I have once given I never take back again."[3]

While thus indifferent to his treasures, he was keenly sensitive to personal slight or insult. When a common soldier once spoke to him angrily, the tears came into the monarch's eyes, as it made him feel the true character of his impotent condition. Cortés, on be-

[3] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 84.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 4.

coming acquainted with it, was so much incensed that he ordered the soldier to be hanged, but, on Montezuma's intercession, commuted this severe sentence for a flogging. The general was not willing that any one but himself should treat his royal captive with indignity. Montezuma was desired to procure a further mitigation of the punishment. But he refused, saying "that, if a similar insult had been offered by any one of his subjects to Malinche, he would have resented it in like manner."[4]

Such instances of disrespect were very rare. Montezuma's amiable and inoffensive manners, together with his liberality, the most popular of virtues with the vulgar, made him generally beloved by the Spaniards.[5] The arrogance for which he had been so distinguished in his prosperous days deserted him in his fallen fortunes. His character in captivity seems to have undergone something of that change which takes place in the wild animals of the forest when caged within the walls of the menagerie.

The Indian monarch knew the name of every man in the army, and was careful to discriminate his proper rank.[6] For some he showed a strong partiality. He obtained from the general a favorite page, named Orteguilla, who, being in constant attendance on his person, soon learned enough of the Mexican language to be of use to his countrymen. Montezuma took

[4] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 5.

[5] "En esto era tan bien mirado, que todos le queriamos con gran amor, porque verdaderamente era gran señor en todas las cosas que le viamos hazer." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 100.

[6] "Y él bien conocia á todos, y sabia nuestros nombres, y aun calidades, y era tan bueno que á todos nos daua joyas, á otros mantas é Indias hermosas." Ibid., cap. 97.

great pleasure, also, in the society of Velasquez de Leon, the captain of his guard, and Pedro de Alvarado, *Tonatiuh*, or "the Sun," as he was called by the Aztecs, from his yellow hair and sunny countenance. The sunshine, as events afterwards showed, could sometimes be the prelude to a terrible tempest.

Notwithstanding the care taken to cheat him of the tedium of captivity, the royal prisoner cast a wistful glance, now and then, beyond the walls of his residence to the ancient haunts of business or pleasure. He intimated a desire to offer up his devotions at the great temple, where he was once so constant in his worship. The suggestion startled Cortés. It was too reasonable, however, for him to object to it without wholly discarding the appearances which he was desirous to maintain. But he secured Montezuma's return by sending an escort with him of a hundred and fifty soldiers under the same resolute cavaliers who had aided in his seizure. He told him, also, that in case of any attempt to escape his life would instantly pay the forfeit. Thus guarded, the Indian prince visited the *teocalli*, where he was received with the usual state, and, after performing his devotions, he returned again to his quarters.[7]

It may well be believed that the Spaniards did not neglect the opportunity afforded by his residence with them, of instilling into him some notions of the Christian doctrine. Fathers Diaz and Olmedo exhausted all their battery of logic and persuasion, to shake his faith in his idols, but in vain. He, indeed, paid a most edifying attention, which gave promise of better

7 Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 98.

things. But the conferences always closed with the declaration that "the God of the Christians was good, but the gods of his own country were the true gods for him."[8] It is said, however, they extorted a promise from him that he would take part in no more human sacrifices. Yet such sacrifices were of daily occurrence in the great temples of the capital; and the people were too blindly attached to their bloody abominations for the Spaniards to deem it safe, for the present at least, openly to interfere.

Montezuma showed, also, an inclination to engage in the pleasures of the chase, of which he once was immoderately fond. He had large forests reserved for the purpose on the other side of the lake. As the Spanish brigantines were now completed, Cortés proposed to transport him and his suite across the water in them. They were of a good size, strongly built. The largest was mounted with four falconets, or small guns. It was protected by a gayly-colored awning stretched over the deck, and the royal ensign of Castile floated proudly from the mast. On board of this vessel, Montezuma, delighted with the opportunity of witnessing the nautical skill of the white men, embarked with a train of Aztec nobles and a numerous guard of Spaniards. A fresh breeze played on the waters, and the vessel soon left behind it the swarms of light pirogues which darkened their surface. She seemed like a thing of life in the eyes of the aston-

[8] According to Solís, the Devil closed his heart against these good men; though, in the historian's opinion, there is no evidence that this evil counsellor actually appeared and conversed with Montezuma after the Spaniards had displayed the Cross in Mexico. Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 20.

ıshed natives, who saw her, as if disdaining human agency, sweeping by with snowy pinions as if on the wings of the wind, while the thunders from her sides, now for the first time breaking on the silence of this "inland sea," showed that the beautiful phantom was clothed in terror.[9]

The royal chase was well stocked with game; some of which the emperor shot with arrows, and others were driven by the numerous attendants into nets.[10] In these woodland exercises, while he ranged over his wild domain, Montezuma seemed to enjoy again the sweets of liberty. It was but the shadow of liberty, however; as in his quarters, at home, he enjoyed but the shadow of royalty. At home or abroad, the eye of the Spaniard was always upon him.

But, while he resigned himself without a struggle to his inglorious fate, there were others who looked on it with very different emotions. Among them was his nephew Cacama, lord of Tezcuco, a young man not more than twenty-five years of age, but who enjoyed great consideration from his high personal qualities, especially his intrepidity of character. He was the same prince who had been sent by Montezuma to welcome the Spaniards on their entrance into the Valley; and, when the question of their reception was first debated in the council, he had advised to admit them

[9] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 99.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 88.

[10] He sometimes killed his game with a tube, a sort of air-gun, through which he blew little balls at birds and rabbits. "La Caça á que Moteçuma iba por la Laguna, era á tirar á Pájaros, á Conejos, con Cerbatana, de la qual era diestro." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 4.

honorably as ambassadors of a foreign prince, and, if they should prove different from what they pretended, it would be time enough then to take up arms against them. That time, he thought, had now come.

In a former part of this work, the reader has been made acquainted with the ancient history of the Acolhuan or Tezcucan monarchy, once the proud rival of the Aztec in power, and greatly its superior in civilization.[11] Under its last sovereign, Nezahuilpilli, its territory is said to have been grievously clipped by the insidious practices of Montezuma, who fomented dissensions and insubordination among his subjects. On the death of the Tezcucan prince, the succession was contested, and a bloody war ensued between his eldest son, Cacama, and an ambitious younger brother, Ixtlilxochitl. This was followed by a partition of the kingdom, in which the latter chieftain held the mountain districts north of the capital, leaving the residue to Cacama. Though shorn of a large part of his hereditary domain, the city was itself so important that the lord of Tezcuco still held a high rank among the petty princes of the Valley. His capital, at the time of the Conquest, contained, according to Cortés, a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants.[12] It was embellished with noble buildings, rivalling those of Mexico itself,

[11] *Ante*, Book I. Chap. 6.

[12] "É llámase esta Ciudad Tezcuco, y será de hasta treinta mil Vecinos." (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 94.) According to the licentiate Zuazo, double that number,—*sesenta mil Vecinos*. (Carta, MS.) Scarcely probable, as Mexico had no more. Toribio speaks of it as covering a league one way by six another! (Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.) This must include the environs to a considerable extent. The language of the old chroniclers is not the most precise.

and the ruins still to be met with on its ancient site attest that it was once the abode of princes.[13]

The young Tezcucan chief beheld with indignation and no slight contempt the abject condition of his uncle. He endeavored to rouse him to manly exertion, but in vain. He then set about forming a league with several of the neighboring caciques to rescue his kinsman and to break the detested yoke of the strangers. He called on the lord of Iztapalapan, Montezuma's brother, the lord of Tlacopan, and some others of most authority, all of whom entered heartily into his views. He then urged the Aztec nobles to join them; but they expressed an unwillingness to take any step not first sanctioned by the emperor.[14] They enter-

[13] A description of the capital in its glory is thus given by an eye-witness. "Esta Ciudad era la segunda cosa principal de la tierra, y así habia en Tezcuco muy grandes edificios de templos del Demonio, y muy gentiles casas y aposentos de Señores, entre los cuales, fué muy cosa de ver la casa del Señor principal, así la vieja con su huerta cercada de mas de mil cedros muy grandes y muy hermosos, de los cuales hoy dia están los mas en pie, aunque la casa está asolada, otra casa tenia que se podia aposentar en ella un egército, con muchos jardines, y un muy grande estanque, que por debajo de tierra solian entrar á él con barcas." (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 7.) The last relics of this palace were employed in the fortifications of the city in the revolutionary war of 1810. (Ixtlilxochitl, Venida de los Esp., p. 78, nota.) Tezcuco is now an insignificant little place, with a population of a few thousand inhabitants. Its architectural remains, as still to be discerned, seem to have made a stronger impression on Mr. Bullock than on most travellers. Six Months in Mexico, chap. 27.

[14] "Cacama reprehendió asperamente á la Nobleza Mexicana porque consentia hacer semejantes desacatos á quatro Estrangeros y que no les mataban; se escusaban con decirles les iban á la mano y no les consentian tomar las Armas para libertarlo, y tomar sí una tan gran deshonra como era la que los Estrangeros les habian hecho en prender á su señor, y quemar á Quauhpopocatzin, los demas sus Hijos y Deu-

tained, undoubtedly, a profound reverence for their master; but it seems probable that jealousy of the personal views of Cacama had its influence on their determination. Whatever were their motives, it is certain that by this refusal they relinquished the best opportunity ever presented for retrieving their sovereign's independence and their own.

These intrigues could not be conducted so secretly as not to reach the ears of Cortés, who, with his characteristic promptness, would have marched at once on Tezcuco and trodden out the spark of "rebellion"[15] before it had time to burst into a flame. But from this he was dissuaded by Montezuma, who represented that Cacama was a man of resolution, backed by a powerful force, and not to be put down without a desperate struggle. He consented, therefore, to negotiate, and sent a message of amicable expostulation to the cacique. He received a haughty answer in return. Cortés rejoined in a more menacing tone, asserting the su-

dos sin culpa, con las Armas y Municion que tenian para la defenza y guarda de la ciudad, y de su autoridad tomar para sí los tesoros del Rey, y de los Dioses, y otras libertades y desvergüenzas que cada dia pasaban, y aunque todo esto vehian lo disimulaban por no enojar á Motecuhzoma que tan amigo y casado estaba con ellos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 86.

[15] It is the language of Cortés. "Y este señor *se rebelló*, assí contra el servicio de Vuestra Alteza, á quien se habia ofrecido, como contra el dicho Muteczuma." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 95.—Voltaire, with his quick eye for the ridiculous, notices this arrogance in his tragedy of Alzire:

> "Tu vois de ces tyrans la fureur despotique:
> Ils pensent que pour eux le Ciel fit l'Amérique,
> Qu'ils en sont nés les Rois; et Zamore à leurs yeux,
> Tout souverain qu'il fut, n'est qu'un séditieux."
>
> ALZIRE, act 4, sc. 3.

premacy of his own sovereign, the emperor of Castile. To this Cacama replied, "He acknowledged no such authority; he knew nothing of the Spanish sovereign or his people, nor did he wish to know anything of them."[16] Montezuma was not more successful in his application to Cacama to come to Mexico and allow him to mediate his differences with the Spaniards, with whom he assured the prince he was residing as a friend. But the young lord of Tezcuco was not to be so duped. He understood the position of his uncle, and replied "that when he did visit his capital it would be to rescue it, as well as the emperor himself, and their common gods, from bondage. He should come, not with his hand in his bosom, but on his sword,—tc drive out the detested strangers who had brought such dishonor on their country!"[17]

Cortés, incensed at this tone of defiance, would again have put himself in motion to punish it, but Montezuma interposed with his more politic arts. He had several of the Tezcucan nobles, he said, in his pay;[18] and it would be easy, through their means, to secure Cacama's person, and thus break up the confederacy, at once, without bloodshed. The maintaining of a corps of stipendiaries in the courts of neighboring

[16] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 91.

[17] "I que para reparar la Religion, i restituir los Dioses, guardar el Reino, cobrar la fama, i libertad á él, i á Méxicọ, iria de mui buena gana, mas no las manos en el seno, sino en la Espada, para matar los Españoles, que tanta mengua, i afrenta havian hecho á la Nacion de Culhúa." Ibid., cap. 91.

[18] "Pero que él tenia en su Tierra de el dicho Cacamazin muchas Personas Principales, que vivian con él, y les daba su salario." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 95.

princes was a refinement which showed that the Western barbarian understood the science of political intrigue as well as some of his royal brethren on the other side of the water.

By the contrivance of these faithless nobles, Cacama was induced to hold a conference, relative to the proposed invasion, in a villa which overhung the Tezcucan lake, not far from his capital. Like most of the principal edifices, it was raised so as to admit the entrance of boats beneath it. In the midst of the conference, Cacama was seized by the conspirators, hurried on board a bark in readiness for the purpose, and transported to Mexico. When brought into Montezuma's presence, the high-spirited chief abated nothing of his proud and lofty bearing. He taxed his uncle with his perfidy, and a pusillanimity so unworthy of his former character and of the royal house from which he was descended. By the emperor he was referred to Cortés, who, holding royalty but cheap in an Indian prince, put him in fetters.[19]

There was at this time in Mexico a brother of Cacama, a stripling much younger than himself. At the instigation of Cortés, Montezuma, pretending that his nephew had forfeited the sovereignty by his late *rebellion*, declared him to be deposed, and appointed Cuicuitzca in his place. The Aztec sovereigns had always been allowed a paramount authority in questions

[19] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 95, 96.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 8.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 86. —The latter author dismisses the capture of Cacama with the comfortable reflection "that it saved the Spaniards much embarrassment, and greatly facilitated the introduction of the Catholic faith."

relating to the succession. But this was a most unwarrantable exercise of it. The Tezcucans acquiesced, however, with a ready ductility, which showed their allegiance hung but lightly on them, or, what is more probable, that they were greatly in awe of the Spaniards; and the new prince was welcomed with acclamations to his capital.[20]

Cortés still wanted to get into his hands the other chiefs who had entered into the confederacy with Cacama. This was no difficult matter. Montezuma's authority was absolute, everywhere but in his own palace. By his command, the caciques were seized, each in his own city, and brought in chains to Mexico, where Cortés placed them in strict confinement with their leader.[21]

He had now triumphed over all his enemies. He had set his foot on the necks of princes; and the great chief of the Aztec empire was but a convenient tool in his hands for accomplishing his purposes. His first

[20] Cortés calls the name of this prince Cucuzca. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 96.) In the orthography of Aztec words, the general was governed by his ear, and was wrong nine times out of ten.—Bustamante, in his catalogue of Tezcucan monarchs, omits him altogether. He probably regards him as an intruder, who had no claim to be ranked among the rightful sovereigns of the land. (Galería de antiguos Príncipes (Puebla, 1821), p. 21.) Sahagun has, in like manner, struck his name from the royal roll of Tezcuco. Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 3.

[21] The exceeding lenity of the Spanish commander, on this occasion, excited general admiration, if we are to credit Solís, throughout the Aztec empire! "Tuvo notable aplauso en todo el imperio este género de castigo sin sangre, que se atribuyó al superior juicio de los Españoles, porque no esperaban de Motezuma semejante moderacion." Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 2.

use of this power was to ascertain the actual resources of the monarchy. He sent several parties of Spaniards, guided by the natives, to explore the regions where gold was obtained. It was gleaned mostly from the beds of rivers, several hundred miles from the capital.

His next object was to learn if there existed any good natural harbor for shipping on the Atlantic coast, as the road of Vera Cruz left no protection against the tempests that at certain seasons swept over these seas. Montezuma showed him a chart on which the shores of the Mexican Gulf were laid down with tolerable accuracy.[22] Cortés, after carefully inspecting it, sent a commission, consisting of ten Spaniards, several of them pilots, and some Aztecs, who descended to Vera Cruz and made a careful survey of the coast for nearly sixty leagues south of that settlement, as far as the great river Coatzacualco, which seemed to offer the best—indeed, the only—accommodations for a safe and suitable harbor. A spot was selected as the site of a fortified post, and the general sent a detachment of a hundred and fifty men under Velasquez de Leon to plant a colony there.

He also obtained a grant of an extensive tract of land in the fruitful province of Oaxaca, where he proposed to lay out a plantation for the crown. He stocked it with the different kinds of domesticated animals peculiar to the country, and with such indigenous grains and plants as would afford the best articles for export. He soon had the estate under such

[22] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 91.

cultivation that he assured his master, the emperor Charles the Fifth, it was worth twenty thousand ounces of gold.[23]

[23] "Damus quæ dant," says Martyr, briefly, in reference to this valuation. (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.) Cortés notices the reports made by his people, of large and beautiful edifices in the province of Oaxaca. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 89.) It is here, also, that some of the most elaborate specimens of Indian architecture are still to be seen, in the ruins of Mitla.

CHAPTER V.

MONTEZUMA SWEARS ALLEGIANCE TO SPAIN.—ROYAL TREASURES. — THEIR DIVISION. — CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE TEOCALLI. — DISCONTENTS OF THE AZTECS.

1520.

CORTÉS now felt his authority sufficiently assured to demand from Montezuma a formal recognition of the supremacy of the Spanish emperor. The Indian monarch had intimated his willingness to acquiesce in this, on their very first interview. He did not object, therefore, to call together his principal caciques for the purpose. When they were assembled, he made them an address, briefly stating the object of the meeting. They were all acquainted, he said, with the ancient tradition that the great Being who had once ruled over the land had declared, on his departure, that he should return at some future time and resume his sway. That time had now arrived. The white men had come from the quarter where the sun rises, beyond the ocean, to which the good deity had withdrawn. They were sent by their master to reclaim the obedience of his ancient subjects. For himself, he was ready to acknowledge his authority. "You have been faithful vassals of mine," continued Montezuma, "during the many years that I have sat on the throne of my fathers. I now expect that you will show me this last act of obedience

by acknowledging the great king beyond the waters to be your lord, also, and that you will pay him tribute in the same manner as you have hitherto done to me."[1] As he concluded, his voice was nearly stifled by his emotion, and the tears fell fast down his cheeks.

His nobles, many of whom, coming from a distance, had not kept pace with the changes which had been going on in the capital, were filled with astonishment as they listened to his words and beheld the voluntary abasement of their master, whom they had hitherto reverenced as the omnipotent lord of Anahuac. They were the more affected, therefore, by the sight of his distress.[2] His will, they told him, had always been their law. It should be so now; and, if he thought the sovereign of the strangers was the ancient lord of their country, they were willing to acknowledge him as such still. The oaths of allegiance were then administered with all due solemnity, attested by the Spaniards present, and a full record of the proceedings was drawn up by the royal notary, to be sent to Spain.[3] There

[1] "Y mucho os ruego, pues á todos os es notorio todo esto, que assí como hasta aquí á mí me habeis tenido, y obedecido por Señor vuestro, de aquí adelante tengais, y obedescais á este Gran Rey, pues él es vuestro natural Señor, y en su lugar tengais á este su Capitan: y todos los Tributos, y Servicios, que fasta aquí á mí me haciades, los haced, y dad á él, porque yo assimismo tengo de contribuir, y servir con todo lo que me mandaré." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 97.

[2] "Lo qual todo les dijo llorando, con las mayores lágrimas, y suspiros, que un hombre podia manifestar; é assimismo todos aquellos Señores, que le estaban oiendo, lloraban tanto, que en gran rato no le pudiéron responder." Ibid., loc. cit.

[3] Solís regards this ceremony as supplying what was before defective in the title of the Spaniards to the country. The remarks are curious,

was something deeply touching in the ceremony by which an independent and absolute monarch, in obedience less to the dictates of fear than of conscience, thus relinquished his hereditary rights in favor of an unknown and mysterious power. It even moved those hard men who were thus unscrupulously availing themselves of the confiding ignorance of the natives; and, though "it was in the regular way of their own business," says an old chronicler, "there was not a Spaniard who could look on the spectacle with a dry eye"![4]

even from a professed casuist: "Y siendo una como insinuacion misteriosa del título que se debió despues al derecho de las armas, sobre justa provocacion, como lo verémos en su lugar: circunstancia particular, que concurrió en la conquista de Méjico para mayor justificacion de aquel dominio, sobre las demas consideraciones generales que no solo hiciéron lícita la guerra en otras partes, sino legítima y razonable siempre que se puso en términos de medio necesario para la introduccion del Evangelio." Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 3.

[4] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 101.—Solís, Conquista, loc. cit.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 9, cap. 4.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 87.—Oviedo considers the grief of Montezuma as sufficient proof that his homage, far from being voluntary, was extorted by necessity. The historian appears to have seen the drift of events more clearly than some of the actors in them. "Y en la verdad si como Cortés lo dice, ó escrivió, passó en efecto, mui gran cosa me parece la conciencia y liberalidad de Montezuma en esta su restitucion é obediencia al Rey de Castilla, por la simple ó cautelosa informacion de Cortés, que le podia hacer para ello; Mas aquellas lágrimas con que dice, que Montezuma hizo su oracion, é amonestamiento, despojándose de su señorío, é las de aquellos con que les respondiéron aceptando lo que les mandaba, y exortaba, y á mi parecer su llanto queria decir, ó enseñar otra cosa de lo que él, y ellos dixéron; porque las obediencias que se suelen dar á los Príncipes con riza, é con cámaras; é diversidad de Música, é leticia, enseñales de placer, se suele hacer; é no con lucto ni lágrimas, é sollozos, ni estando preso quien obedece; porque como dice Marco Varron: Lo que por fuerza se da no es servicio sino robo." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 9.

The rumor of these strange proceedings was soon circulated through the capital and the country. Men read in them the finger of Providence. The ancient tradition of Quetzalcoatl was familiar to all; and where it had slept scarcely noticed in the memory, it was now revived with many exaggerated circumstances. It was said to be part of the tradition that the royal line of the Aztecs was to end with Montezuma; and his name, the literal signification of which is "sad" or "angry lord," was construed into an omen of his evil destiny.[5]

Having thus secured this great feudatory to the crown of Castile, Cortés suggested that it would be well for the Aztec chiefs to send his sovereign such a gratuity as would conciliate his good will by convincing him of the loyalty of his new vassals.[6] Montezuma consented that his collectors should visit the principal cities and provinces, attended by a number of Spaniards, to receive the customary tributes, in the name of the Castilian sovereign. In a few weeks most of them returned, bringing back large quantities of gold and silver plate, rich stuffs, and the various commodities in which the taxes were usually paid.

To this store Montezuma added, on his own account, the treasure of Axayacatl, previously noticed, some part of which had been already given to the Spaniards. It was the fruit of long and careful hoarding,—of ex-

[5] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 92.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 256.

[6] "Pareceria que ellos comenzaban á servir, y Vuestra Alteza tendria mas concepto de las voluntades, que á su servicio mostraban." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 98.

tortion, it may be,—by a prince who little dreamed of its final destination. When brought into the quarters, the gold alone was sufficient to make three great heaps. It consisted partly of native grains; part had been melted into bars; but the greatest portion was in utensils, and various kinds of ornaments and curious toys, together with imitations of birds, insects, or flowers, executed with uncommon truth and delicacy. There were, also, quantities of collars, bracelets, wands, fans, and other trinkets, in which the gold and feather-work were richly powdered with pearls and precious stones. Many of the articles were even more admirable for the workmanship than for the value of the materials;[7] such, indeed,—if we may take the report of Cortés to one who would himself have soon an opportunity to judge of its veracity, and whom it would not be safe to trifle with,—as no monarch in Europe could boast in his dominions![8]

Magnificent as it was, Montezuma expressed his regret that the treasure was no larger. But he had diminished it, he said, by his former gifts to the white men. "Take it," he added, "Malinche, and let it

[7] Peter Martyr, distrusting some extravagance in this statement of Cortés, found it fully confirmed by the testimony of others. "Referunt non credenda. Credenda tamen, quando vir talis ad Cæsarem et nostri collegii Indici senatores audeat exscribere. Addes insuper se multa prætermittere, ne tanta recensendo sit molestus. *Idem affirmant qui ad nos inde regrediuntur.*" De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 3.

[8] "Las quales, demas de su valor, eran tales, y tan maravillosas, que consideradas por su novedad, y estrañeza, no tenian precio, ni es de creer, que alguno de todos los Príncipes del Mundo de quien se tiene noticia, las pudiesse tener tales, y de tal calidad." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 99.—See, also, Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 9,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 104.

be recorded in your annals that Montezuma sent this present to your master."[9]

The Spaniards gazed with greedy eyes on the display of riches,[10] now their own, which far exceeded all hitherto seen in the New World, and fell nothing short of the *El Dorado* which their glowing imaginations had depicted. It may be that they felt somewhat rebuked by the contrast which their own avarice presented to the princely munificence of the barbarian chief. At least, they seemed to testify their sense of his superiority by the respectful homage which they rendered him, as they poured forth the fulness of their gratitude.[11] They were not so scrupulous, however, as to manifest any delicacy in appropriating to themselves the donative, a small part of which was to find its way into the royal coffers. They clamored loudly for an immediate division of the spoil, which the general would have postponed till the tributes from the remoter provinces had been gathered in. The goldsmiths of Azcapozalco were sent for to take in pieces the larger and coarser ornaments, leaving untouched those of more delicate workmanship. Three days were consumed in this labor, when the heaps of gold were cast into ingots and stamped with the royal arms.

9 "Dezilde en vuestros anales y cartas: Esto os embia vuestro buen vassallo Monteçuma." Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

10 "Fluctibus auri
Expleri calor ille nequit."
CLAUDIAN, In Ruf., lib. 1.

11 "Y quãdo aquello le oyó Çortés, y todos nosotros, estuvímos espantados de la gran bondad, y liberalidad del gran Monteçuma, y con mucho acato le quitámos todos las gorras de armas, y le dixímos, que se lo teniamos en merced, y con palabras de mucho amor," etc. Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

Some difficulty occurred in the division of the treasure, from the want of weights, which, strange as it appears, considering their advancement in the arts, were, as already observed, unknown to the Aztecs. The deficiency was soon supplied by the Spaniards, however, with scales and weights of their own manufacture, probably not the most exact. With the aid of these they ascertained the value of the royal fifth to be thirty-two thousand and four hundred *pesos de oro*.[12] Diaz swells it to nearly four times that amount.[13] But their desire of securing the emperor's favor makes it improbable that the Spaniards should have defrauded the exchequer of any part of its due; while, as Cortés was responsible for the sum admitted in his letter, he would be still less likely to overstate it. His estimate may be received as the true one.

The whole amounted, therefore, to one hundred and sixty-two thousand *pesos de oro*, independently of the fine ornaments and jewelry, the value of which Cortés computes at five hundred thousand ducats more. There were, besides, five hundred marks of silver, chiefly in plate, drinking-cups, and other articles of luxury. The

[12] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 99.—This estimate of the royal fifth is confirmed (with the exception of the four hundred ounces) by the affidavits of a number of witnesses cited on behalf of Cortés to show the amount of the treasure. Among these witnesses we find some of the most respectable names in the army, as Olid, Ordaz, Avila, the priests Olmedo and Diaz,—the last, it may be added, not too friendly to the general. The instrument, which is without date, is in the collection of Vargas Ponçe. Probanza fecha á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde, MS.

[13] "Eran tres montones *de oro*, y pesado huvo en ellos sobre *seis cientos mil pesos*, como adelante diré, sin la plata, é otras muchas riquezas." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 104.

inconsiderable quantity of the silver, as compared with the gold, forms a singular contrast to the relative proportions of the two metals since the occupation of the country by the Europeans.[14] The whole amount of the treasure, reduced to our own currency, and making allowance for the change in the value of gold since the beginning of the sixteenth century, was about six million three hundred thousand dollars, or one million four hundred and seventeen thousand pounds sterling; a sum large enough to show the incorrectness of the popular notion that little or no wealth was found in Mexico.[15] It was, indeed, small in comparison with

[14] The quantity of silver taken from the American mines has exceeded that of gold in the ratio of forty-six to one. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iii. p. 401.) The value of the latter metal, says Clemencin, which on the discovery of the New World was only eleven times greater than that of the former, has now come to be sixteen times. (Memorias de la Real Acad. de Hist., tom. vi. Ilust. 20.) This does not vary materially from Smith's estimate made after the middle of the last century. (Wealth of Nations, book 1, chap. 11.) The difference would have been much more considerable, but for the greater demand for silver for objects of ornament and use.

[15] Dr. Robertson, preferring the authority, it seems, of Diaz, speaks of the value of the treasure as 600,000 *pesos*. (History of America, vol. ii. pp. 296, 298.) The value of the *peso* is an ounce of silver, or dollar, which, making allowance for the depreciation of silver, represented, in the time of Cortés, nearly four times its value at the present day. But that of the *peso de oro* was nearly three times that sum, or eleven dollars sixty-seven cents. (See *ante*, Book II. chap. 6, note 18.) Robertson makes his own estimate, so much reduced below that of his original, an argument for doubting the existence, in any great quantity, of either gold or silver in the country. In accounting for the scarcity of the former metal in this argument, he falls into an error in stating that gold was not one of the standards by which the value of other commodities in Mexico was estimated. Comp. *ante* vol. i. p. 148.

that obtained by the conquerors of Peru. But few European monarchs of that day could boast a larger treasure in their coffers.[16]

The division of the spoil was a work of some difficulty. A perfectly equal division of it among the Conquerors would have given them more than three thousand pounds sterling apiece; a magnificent booty! But one-fifth was to be deducted for the crown. An equal portion was reserved for the general, pursuant to the tenor of his commission. A large sum was then allowed to indemnify him and the governor of Cuba for the charges of the expedition and the loss of the fleet. The garrison of Vera Cruz was also to be provided for. Ample compensation was made to the principal cavaliers. The cavalry, arquebusiers, and crossbowmen each received double pay. So that when the turn of the common soldiers came there remained not more than a hundred *pesos de oro* for each; a sum so insignificant, in comparison with their expectations, that several refused to accept it.[17]

Loud murmurs now rose among the men. "Was it for this," they said, "that we left our homes and families, perilled our lives, submitted to fatigue and famine, and all for so contemptible a pittance? Better to have

[16] Many of them, indeed, could boast little or nothing in their coffers. Maximilian of Germany, and the more prudent Ferdinand of Spain, left scarcely enough to defray their funeral expenses. Even as late as the beginning of the next century we find Henry IV. of France embracing his minister, Sully, with rapture when he informed him that, by dint of great economy, he had 36,000,000 livres—about 1,500,000 pounds sterling—in his treasury. See Mémoires du Duc de Sully, tom. iii. liv. 27.

[17] "Por ser tan poco, muchos soldados huuo que no lo quisiéron recebir." Bernal Diaz. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 105.

stayed in Cuba and contented ourselves with the gains of a safe and easy traffic. When we gave up our share of the gold at Vera Cruz, it was on the assurance that we should be amply requited in Mexico. We have, indeed, found the riches we expected; but no sooner seen, than they are snatched from us by the very men who pledged us their faith!" The malecontents even went so far as to accuse their leaders of appropriating to themselves several of the richest ornaments before the partition had been made; an accusation that receives some countenance from a dispute which arose between Mexia, the treasurer for the crown, and Velasquez de Leon, a relation of the governor, and a favorite of Cortés. The treasurer accused this cavalier of purloining certain pieces of plate before they were submitted to the royal stamp. From words the parties came to blows. They were good swordsmen; several wounds were given on both sides, and the affair might have ended fatally, but for the interference of Cortés, who placed both under arrest.

He then used all his authority and insinuating eloquence to calm the passions of his men. It was a delicate crisis. He was sorry, he said, to see them so unmindful of the duty of loyal soldiers and cavaliers of the Cross, as to brawl like common banditti over their booty. The division, he assured them, had been made on perfectly fair and equitable principles. As to his own share, it was no more than was warranted by his commission. Yet, if they thought it too much, he was willing to forego his just claims and divide with the poorest soldier. Gold, however welcome, was not the chief object of his ambition. If it were theirs,

they should still reflect that the present treasure was little in comparison with what awaited them hereafter; for had they not the whole country and its mines at their disposal? It was only necessary that they should not give an opening to the enemy, by their discord, to circumvent and to crush them. With these honeyed words, of which he had good store for all fitting occasions, says an old soldier,[18] for whose benefit, in part, they were intended, he succeeded in calming the storm for the present; while in private he took more effectual means, by presents judiciously administered, to mitigate the discontents of the importunate and refractory. And, although there were a few of more tenacious temper, who treasured this in their memories against a future day, the troops soon returned to their usual subordination. This was one of those critical conjunctures which taxed all the address and personal authority of Cortés. He never shrunk from them, but on such occasions was true to himself. At Vera Cruz he had persuaded his followers to give up what was but the earnest of future gains. Here he persuaded them to relinquish these gains themselves. It was snatching the prey from the very jaws of the lion. Why did he not turn and rend him?

To many of the soldiers, indeed, it mattered little whether their share of the booty were more or less. Gaming is a deep-rooted passion in the Spaniard, and the sudden acquisition of riches furnished both the means and the motive for its indulgence. Cards were easily made out of old parchment drum-heads, and in

[18] "Palabras muy melifluas; . . . razones mui bien dichas, que las sabia bien proponer." Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

a few days most of the prize-money, obtained with so much toil and suffering, had changed hands, and many of the improvident soldiers closed the campaign as poor as they had commenced it. Others, it is true, more prudent, followed the example of their officers, who, with the aid of the royal jewellers, converted their gold into chains, services of plate, and other portable articles of ornament or use.[19]

Cortés seemed now to have accomplished the great objects of the expedition. The Indian monarch had declared himself the feudatory of the Spanish. His authority, his revenues, were at the disposal of the general. The conquest of Mexico seemed to be achieved, and that without a blow. But it was far from being achieved. One important step yet remained to be taken, towards which the Spaniards had hitherto made little progress,—the conversion of the natives. With all the exertions of Father Olmedo, backed by the polemic talents of the general,[20] neither Montezuma nor his subjects showed any disposition to abjure the faith of their fathers.[21] The bloody exercises of their re-

[19] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 105, 106.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 93.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 5.

[20] "Ex jureconsulto Cortesius theologus effectus," says Martyr, in his pithy manner. De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 4.

[21] According to Ixtlilxochitl, Montezuma got as far on the road to conversion as the *Credo* and the *Ave Maria*, both of which he could repeat; but his baptism was postponed, and he died before receiving it. That he ever consented to receive it is highly improbable. I quote the historian's words, in which he further notices the general's unsuccessful labors among the Indians: "Cortés comenzó á dar órden de la conversion de los Naturales, diciéndoles, que pues eran vasallos del Rey de España que se tornasen Cristianos como él lo era, y así se comenzáron á Bautizar algunos aunque fuéron muy pocos, y Mo-

ligion, on the contrary, were celebrated with all the usual circumstance and pomp of sacrifice before the eyes of the Spaniards.

Unable further to endure these abominations, Cortés, attended by several of his cavaliers, waited on Montezuma. He told the emperor that the Christians could no longer consent to have the services of their religion shut up within the narrow walls of the garrison. They wished to spread its light far abroad, and to open to the people a full participation in the blessings of Christianity. For this purpose, they requested that the great *teocalli* should be delivered up, as a fit place where their worship might be conducted in the presence of the whole city.

Montezuma listened to the proposal with visible consternation. Amidst all his troubles he had leaned for support on his own faith, and, indeed, it was in obedience to it that he had shown such deference to the Spaniards as the mysterious messengers predicted by the oracles. "Why," said he, "Malinche, why will you urge matters to an extremity, that must surely bring down the vengeance of our gods, and stir up an insurrection among my people, who will never endure this profanation of their temples?" [22]

tecuhzoma aunque pidió el Bautismo, y sabia algunas de las oraciones como eran el Ave María, y el Credo, se dilató por la Pasqua siguiente, que era la de Resurreccion, y fué tan desdichado que nunca alcanzó tanto bien, y los Nuestros con la dilacion y aprieto en que se viéron, se descuidáron, de que pesó á todos mucho muriese sin Bautismo." Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 87.

[22] "O Malinche, y como nos quereis echar á perder á toda esta ciudad, porque estarán mui enojados nuestros Dioses contra nosotros, y aun vuestras vidas no sé en que pararán." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 107.

Cortés, seeing how greatly he was moved, made a sign to his officers to withdraw. When left alone with the interpreters, he told the emperor that he would use his influence to moderate the zeal of his followers, and persuade them to be contented with one of the sanctuaries of the *teocalli*. If that were not granted, they should be obliged to take it by force, and to roll down the images of his false deities in the face of the city. "We fear not for our lives," he added, "for, though our numbers are few, the arm of the true God is over us." Montezuma, much agitated, told him that he would confer with the priests.

The result of the conference was favorable to the Spaniards, who were allowed to occupy one of the sanctuaries as a place of worship. The tidings spread great joy throughout the camp. They might now go forth in open day and publish their religion to the assembled capital. No time was lost in availing themselves of the permission. The sanctuary was cleansed of its disgusting impurities. An altar was raised, surmounted by a crucifix and the image of the Virgin. Instead of the gold and jewels which blazed on the neighboring pagan shrine, its walls were decorated with fresh garlands of flowers; and an old soldier was stationed to watch over the chapel and guard it from intrusion.

When these arrangements were completed, the whole army moved in solemn procession up the winding ascent of the pyramid. Entering the sanctuary, and clustering round its portals, they listened reverentially to the service of the mass, as it was performed by the fathers Olmedo and Diaz. And, as the beautiful *Te*

Deum rose towards heaven, Cortés and his soldiers, kneeling on the ground, with tears streaming from their eyes, poured forth their gratitude to the Almighty for this glorious triumph of the Cross.[23]

It was a striking spectacle,—that of these rude warriors lifting up their orisons on the summit of this mountain temple, in the very capital of heathendom, on the spot especially dedicated to its unhallowed mysteries. Side by side, the Spaniard and the Aztec knelt down in prayer; and the Christian hymn mingled its sweet tones of love and mercy with the wild chant raised by the Indian priest in honor of the war-god of Anahuac! It was an unnatural union, and could not long abide.

A nation will endure any outrage sooner than that on its religion. This is an outrage both on its principles and its prejudices; on the ideas instilled into it from childhood, which have strengthened with its growth, until they become a part of its nature,—which have to do with its highest interests here, and with the dread hereafter. Any violence to the religious sentiment touches all alike, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the noble and the plebeian. Above

[23] This transaction is told with more discrepancy than usual by the different writers. Cortés assures the emperor that he occupied the temple, and turned out the false gods by force, in spite of the menaces of the Mexicans. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 106.) The improbability of this Quixotic feat startles Oviedo, who nevertheless reports it. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10.) It looks, indeed, very much as if the general was somewhat too eager to set off his militant zeal to advantage in the eyes of his master. The statements of Diaz, and of other chroniclers, conformably to that in the text, seem far the most probable. Comp. Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 6.—Argensola, Anales, lib. 1, cap. 88

all, it touches the priests, whose personal consideration rests on that of their religion, and who, in a semi-civilized state of society, usually hold an unbounded authority. Thus it was with the Brahmins of India, the Magi of Persia, the Roman Catholic clergy in the Dark Ages, the priests of Ancient Egypt and Mexico.

The people had borne with patience all the injuries and affronts hitherto put on them by the Spaniards. They had seen their sovereign dragged as a captive from his own palace, his ministers butchered before his eyes, his treasure seized and appropriated, himself in a manner deposed from his royal supremacy. All this they had seen, without a struggle to prevent it. But the profanation of their temples touched a deeper feeling, of which the priesthood were not slow to take advantage.[24]

The first intimation of this change of feeling was gathered from Montezuma himself. Instead of his usual cheerfulness, he appeared grave and abstracted, and instead of seeking, as he was wont, the society of the Spaniards, seemed rather to shun it. It was noticed, too, that conferences were more frequent between him and the nobles, and especially the priests. His little

[24] "Para mí yo tengo por marabilla, é grande, la mucha paciencia de Montezuma, y de los Indios principales, que assí viéron tratar sus Templos, é Idolos: Mas su disimulacion adelante se mostró ser otra cosa viendo, que vna Gente Extrangera, é de tan poco número, les prendió su Señor é porque formas los hacia tributarios, é se castigaban é quemaban los principales, é se aniquilaban y disipaban sus templos, é hasta en aquellos y sus antecesores estaban. Recia cosa me parece soportarla con tanta quietud; pero adelante, como lo dirá la Historia, mostró el tiempo lo que en el pecho estaba oculto en todos los Indios generalmente." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10.

page, Orteguilla, who had now picked up a tolerable acquaintance with the Aztec, contrary to Montezuma's usual practice, was not allowed to attend him at these meetings. These circumstances could not fail to awaken most uncomfortable apprehensions in the Spaniards.

Not many days elapsed, however, before Cortés received an invitation, or rather a summons, from the emperor to attend him in his apartment. The general went with some feelings of anxiety and distrust, taking with him Olid, captain of the guard, and two or three other trusty cavaliers. Montezuma received them with cold civility, and, turning to the general, told him that all his predictions had come to pass. The gods of his country had been offended by the violation of their temples. They had threatened the priests that they would forsake the city if the sacrilegious strangers were not driven from it, or rather sacrificed on the altars in expiation of their crimes.[25] The monarch assured the Christians it was from regard for their safety that he communicated this; and, "if you have any regard for it yourselves," he concluded, "you will leave the

[25] According to Herrera, it was the Devil himself who communicated this to Montezuma, and he reports the substance of the dialogue between the parties. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 9, cap. 6.) Indeed, the apparition of Satan in his own bodily presence, on this occasion, is stoutly maintained by most historians of the time. Oviedo, a man of enlarged ideas on most subjects, speaks with a little more qualification on this: "Porque la Misa y Evangelio, que predicaban y decian los christianos, le [al Diablo] daban gran tormento; y débese pensar, si verdad es, que esas gentes tienen tanta conversacion y comunicacion con nuestro adversario, *como se tiene por cierto en estas Indias*, que no le podia á nuestro enemigo placer con los misterios y sacramentos de la sagrada religion christiana." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

country without delay. I have only to raise my finger, and every Aztec in the land will rise in arms against you." There was no reason to doubt his sincerity. For Montezuma, whatever evils had been brought on him by the white men, held them in reverence as a race more highly gifted than his own, while for several, as we have seen, he had conceived an attachment, flowing, no doubt, from their personal attentions and deference to himself.

Cortés was too much master of his feelings to show how far he was started by this intelligence. He replied, with admirable coolness, that he should regret much to leave the capital so precipitately, when he had no vessels to take him from the country. If it were not for this, there could be no obstacle to his leaving it at once. He should also regret another step to which he should be driven, if he quitted it under these circumstances,—that of taking the emperor along with him.

Montezuma was evidently troubled by this last suggestion. He inquired how long it would take to build the vessels, and finally consented to send a sufficient number of workmen to the coast, to act under the orders of the Spaniards; meanwhile, he would use his authority to restrain the impatience of the people, under the assurance that the white men would leave the land when the means for it were provided. He kept his word. A large body of Aztec artisans left the capital with the most experienced Castilian shipbuilders, and, descending to Vera Cruz, began at once to fell the timber and build a sufficient number of ships to transport the Spaniards back to their own country. The work went forward with apparent alacrity. But

those who had the direction of it, it is said, received private instructions from the general to interpose as many delays as possible, in hopes of receiving in the mean time such reinforcements from Europe as would enable him to maintain his ground.[26]

The whole aspect of things was now changed in the Castilian quarters. Instead of the security and repose in which the troops had of late indulged, they felt a gloomy apprehension of danger, not the less oppressive to the spirits that it was scarcely visible to the eye;—like the faint speck just descried above the horizon by the voyager in the tropics, to the common gaze seeming only a summer cloud, but which to the experienced mariner bodes the coming of the hurricane. Every precaution that prudence could devise was taken to meet it. The soldier, as he threw himself on his mats for repose, kept on his armor. He ate, drank, slept, with his weapons by his side. His horse stood ready caparisoned, day and night, with the bridle hanging at the saddle-bow. The guns were carefully planted so as to command the great avenues. The sentinels were

[26] "É Cortés proveió de maestros é personas que entendiesen en la labor de los Navíos, é dixo despues á los Españoles desta manera: Señores y hermanos, este Señor Montezuma quiere que nos vamos de la tierra, y conviene que se hagan Navíos. Id con estos Indios é córtese la madera; é entretanto Dios nos proveherá de gente é socorro; por tanto, poned tal dilacion que parezca que haceis algo y se haga con ella lo que nos conviene; é siempre me escrivid é avisad que tales estáis en la Montaña, é que no sientan los Indios nuestra disimulacion. É así se puso por obra." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.) So, also, Gomara. (Crónica, cap. 95.) Diaz denies any such secret orders, alleging that Martin Lopez, the principal builder, assured him they made all the expedition possible in getting three ships on the stocks. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 108.

doubled, and every man, of whatever rank, took his turn in mounting guard. The garrison was in a state of siege.[27] Such was the uncomfortable position of the army when, in the beginning of May, 1520, six months after their arrival in the capital, tidings came from the coast which gave greater alarm to Cortés than even the menaced insurrection of the Aztecs.

[27] "I may say without vaunting," observes our stout-hearted old chronicler, Bernal Diaz, "that I was so accustomed to this way of life, that since the conquest of the country I have never been able to lie down undressed, or in a bed; yet I sleep as sound as if I were on the softest down. Even when I make the rounds of my *encomienda*, I never take a bed with me, unless, indeed, I go in the company of other cavaliers, who might impute this to parsimony. But even then I throw myself on it with my clothes on. Another thing I must add, that I cannot sleep long in the night without getting up to look at the heavens and the stars, and stay a while in the open air, and this without a bonnet or covering of any sort on my head. And, thanks to God, I have received no harm from it. I mention these things, that the world may understand of what stuff we, the true Conquerors, were made, and how well drilled we were to arms and watching." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 108.

CHAPTER VI.

FATE OF CORTÉS' EMISSARIES. — PROCEEDINGS IN THE CASTILIAN COURT. — PREPARATIONS OF VELASQUEZ. — NARVAEZ LANDS IN MEXICO. — POLITIC CONDUCT OF CORTÉS. — HE LEAVES THE CAPITAL.

1520.

BEFORE explaining the nature of the tidings alluded to in the preceding chapter, it will be necessary to cast a glance over some of the transactions of an earlier period. The vessel, which, as the reader may remember, bore the envoys Puertocarrero and Montejo with the despatches from Vera Cruz, after touching, contrary to orders, at the northern coast of Cuba, and spreading the news of the late discoveries, held on its way uninterrupted towards Spain, and early in October, 1519, reached the little port of San Lucar. Great was the sensation caused by her arrival and the tidings which she brought; a sensation scarcely inferior to that created by the original discovery of Columbus. For now, for the first time, all the magnificent anticipations formed of the New World seemed destined to be realized.

Unfortunately, there was a person in Seville at this time, named Benito Martin, chaplain of Velasquez, the governor of Cuba. No sooner did this man learn the arrival of the envoys, and the particulars of their story,

than he lodged a complaint with the *Casa de Contratacion*,—the Royal India House,—charging those on board the vessel with mutiny and rebellion against the authorities of Cuba, as well as with treason to the crown.[1] In consequence of his representations, the ship was taken possession of by the public officers, and those on board were prohibited from removing their own effects, or anything else, from her. The envoys were not even allowed the funds necessary for the expenses of the voyage, nor a considerable sum remitted by Cortés to his father, Don Martin. In this embarrassment they had no alternative but to present themselves, as speedily as possible, before the emperor, deliver the letters with which they had been charged by the colony, and seek redress for their own grievances. They first sought out Martin Cortés, residing at Medellin, and with him made the best of their way to court.

Charles the Fifth was then on his first visit to Spain after his accession. It was not a long one; long enough, however, to disgust his subjects, and, in a great degree, to alienate their affections. He had lately received intelligence of his election to the imperial crown of Germany. From that hour his eyes were turned to that quarter. His stay in the Peninsula was prolonged only that he might raise supplies for appearing with splendor on the great theatre of Europe.

[1] In the collection of MSS. made by Don Vargas Ponçe, former President of the Academy of History, is a Memorial of this same Benito Martin to the emperor, setting forth the services of Velasquez and the ingratitude and revolt of Cortés and his followers. The paper is without date; written after the arrival of the envoys, probably at the close of 1519 or the beginning of the following year.

Every act showed too plainly that the diadem of his ancestors was held lightly in comparison with the imperial bauble in which neither his countrymen nor his own posterity could have the slightest interest. The interest was wholly personal.

Contrary to established usage, he had summoned the Castilian córtes to meet at Compostella, a remote town in the north, which presented no other advantage than that of being near his place of embarkation.[2] On his way thither he stopped some time at Tordesillas, the residence of his unhappy mother, Joanna "the Mad." It was here that the envoys from Vera Cruz presented themselves before him, in March, 1520. At nearly the same time, the treasures brought over by them reached the court, where they excited unbounded admiration.[3] Hitherto, the returns from the New World had been chiefly in vegetable products, which, if the surest, are also the slowest sources of wealth. Of gold they had as yet seen but little, and that in its natural state or wrought into the rudest trinkets. The courtiers gazed with astonishment on the large masses of the precious metal, and the delicate manufacture of the various articles, especially of the richly tinted feather-work. And, as they listened to the accounts, written and oral, of the great Aztec empire, they felt assured that the Cas-

[2] Sandoval, indeed, gives a singular reason,—that of being near the coast, so as to enable Chièvres and the other Flemish blood-suckers to escape suddenly, if need were, with their ill-gotten treasures, from the country. Hist. de Cárlos Quinto, tom. i. p. 203, ed. Pamplona, 1634.

[3] See the letter of Peter Martyr to his noble friend and pupil, the Marquis de Mondejar, written two months after the arrival of the vessel from Vera Cruz. Opus Epist., ep. 650.

tilian ships had at length reached the golden Indies, which hitherto had seemed to recede before them.

In this favorable mood there is little doubt the monarch would have granted the petition of the envoys, and confirmed the irregular proceedings of the Conquerors, but for the opposition of a person who held the highest office in the Indian department. This was Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, formerly dean of Seville, now bishop of Burgos. He was a man of noble family, and had been intrusted with the direction of the colonial concerns on the discovery of the New World. On the establishment of the Royal Council of the Indies by Ferdinand the Catholic, he had been made its president, and had occupied that post ever since. His long continuance in a position of great importance and difficulty is evidence of capacity for business. It was no uncommon thing in that age to find ecclesiastics in high civil, and even military, employments. Fonseca appears to have been an active, efficient person, better suited to a secular than to a religious vocation. He had, indeed, little that was religious in his temper; quick to take offence and slow to forgive. His resentments seem to have been nourished and perpetuated like a part of his own nature. Unfortunately, his peculiar position enabled him to display them towards some of the most illustrious men of his time. From pique at some real or fancied slight from Columbus, he had constantly thwarted the plans of the great navigator. He had shown the same unfriendly feeling towards the Admiral's son, Diego, the heir of his honors; and he now, and from this time forward, showed a similar spirit towards the Conqueror of Mexico. The

immediate cause of this was his own personal relations with Velasquez, to whom a near relative was betrothed.[4]

Through this prelate's representations, Charles, instead of a favorable answer to the envoys, postponed his decision till he should arrive at Coruña, the place of embarkation.[5] But here he was much pressed by the troubles which his impolitic conduct had raised, as well as by preparations for his voyage. The transaction of the colonial business, which, long postponed, had greatly accumulated on his hands, was reserved for the last week in Spain. But the affairs of the "young admiral" consumed so large a portion of this, that he had no time to give to those of Cortés, except, indeed, to instruct the board at Seville to remit to the envoys so much of their funds as was required to defray the charges of the voyage. On the 16th of May, 1520, the impatient monarch bade adieu to his distracted kingdom, without one attempt to settle the dispute between his belligerent vassals in the New World, and without an effort to promote the magnificent enterprise which was to secure to him the possession of an empire. What a contrast to the policy of his illustrious predecessors, Ferdinand and Isabella![6]

[4] Zuñiga, Anales eclesiásticos y seculares de Sevilla (Madrid, 1677), fol. 414.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 14; lib. 9, cap. 17, et alibi.

[5] Velasquez, it appears, had sent home an account of the doings of Cortés and of the vessel which touched with the treasures at Cuba, as early as October, 1519. Carta de Velasquez al Lic. Figueroa, MS., Nov. 17, 1519.

[6] "With loud music from clarions and flutes, and with great demonstrations of joy, they weighed anchor and unfurled their sails to the wind, leaving unhappy Spain oppressed with sorrows and misfortunes." Sandoval, Hist. de Cárlos Quinto, tom. i. p. 219.

The governor of Cuba, meanwhile, without waiting for support from home, took measures for redress into his own hands. We have seen in a preceding chapter how deeply he was moved by the reports of the proceedings of Cortés, and of the treasures which his vessel was bearing to Spain. Rage, mortification, disappointed avarice, distracted his mind. He could not forgive himself for trusting the affair to such hands. On the very week in which Cortés had parted from him to take charge of the fleet, a *capitulation* had been signed by Charles the Fifth, conferring on Velasquez the title of *adelantado*, with great augmentation of his original powers.[7] The governor resolved, without loss of time, to send such a force to the Mexican coast as should enable him to assert his new authority to its full extent and to take vengeance on his rebellious officer. He began his preparations as early as October.[8] At first he proposed to assume the command in person. But his unwieldy size, which disqualified him for the fatigues incident to such an expedition, or, according to his own account, tenderness for his Indian subjects, then wasted by an epidemic, induced him to devolve the command on another.[9]

[7] The instrument was dated at Barcelona, Nov. 13, 1518. Cortés left St. Jago the 18th of the same month. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 11.

[8] Gomara (Crónica, cap. 96) and Robertson (History of America, vol. ii. pp. 304, 466) consider that the new dignity of *adelantado* stimulated the governor to this enterprise. By a letter of his own writing in the Muñoz collection, it appears he had begun operations some months previous to his receiving notice of his appointment. Carta de Velasquez al Señor de Xêvres, Isla Fernandina, MS., Octubre 12, 1519.

[9] Carta de Velasquez al Lic. Figueroa, MS., Nov. 17, 1519.

The person whom he selected was a Castilian hidalgo, named Pánfilo de Narvaez. He had assisted Velasquez in the reduction of Cuba, where his conduct cannot be wholly vindicated from the charge of inhumanity which too often attaches to the early Spanish adventurers. From that time he continued to hold important posts under the government, and was a decided favorite with Velasquez. He was a man of some military capacity, though negligent and lax in his discipline. He possessed undoubted courage, but it was mingled with an arrogance, or rather overweening confidence in his own powers, which made him deaf to the suggestions of others more sagacious than himself. He was altogether deficient in that prudence and calculating foresight demanded in a leader who was to cope with an antagonist like Cortés.[10]

The governor and his lieutenant were unwearied in their efforts to assemble an army. They visited every considerable town in the island, fitting out vessels, laying in stores and ammunition, and encouraging volunteers to enlist by liberal promises. But the most effectual bounty was the assurance of the rich treasures that awaited them in the golden regions of Mexico. So confident were they in this expectation, that all classes and ages vied with one another in eagerness to embark in the expedition, until it seemed as if the whole white population would

[10] The person of Narvaez is thus whimsically described by Diaz: 'He was tall, stout-limbed, with a large head and red beard, an agreeable presence, a voice deep and sonorous, as if it rose from a cavern. He was a good horseman and valiant." Hist. de la Conquista, cap 205.

desert the island and leave it to its primitive occupants.[11]

The report of these proceedings soon spread through the Islands, and drew the attention of the Royal Audience of St. Domingo. This body was intrusted, at that time, not only with the highest judicial authority in the colonies, but with a civil jurisdiction, which, as "the Admiral" complained, encroached on his own rights. The tribunal saw with alarm the proposed expedition of Velasquez, which, whatever might be its issue in regard to the parties, could not fail to compromise the interests of the crown. They chose accordingly one of their number, the licentiate Ayllon, a man of prudence and resolution, and despatched him to Cuba, with instructions to interpose his authority, and stay, if possible, the proceedings of Velasquez.[12]

On his arrival, he found the governor in the western part of the island, busily occupied in getting the fleet ready for sea. The licentiate explained to him the purport of his mission, and the views entertained of the proposed enterprise by the Royal Audience. The conquest of a powerful country like Mexico required the whole force of the Spaniards, and, if one half were employed against the other, nothing but ruin could come of it. It was the governor's duty, as a good subject, to forego all private animosities, and to sustain those now engaged in the great work by sending them the necessary supplies. He might, indeed, proclaim

[11] The danger of such a result is particularly urged in a memorandum of the licentiate Ayllon. Carta al Emperador Guaniguanico, Marzo 4, 1520, MS.

[12] Processo y Pesquiza hecha por la Real Audiencia de la Española, Santo Domingo, Diciembre 24, 1519, MS.

his own powers and demand obedience to them. But, if this were refused, he should leave the determination of his dispute to the authorized tribunals, and employ his resources in prosecuting discovery in another direction, instead of hazarding all by hostilities with his rival.

This admonition, however sensible and salutary, was not at all to the taste of the governor. He professed, indeed, to have no intention of coming to hostilities with Cortés. He designed only to assert his lawful jurisdiction over territories discovered under his own auspices. At the same time, he denied the right of Ayllon or of the Royal Audience to interfere in the matter. Narvaez was still more refractory, and, as the fleet was now ready, proclaimed his intention to sail in a few hours. In this state of things, the licentiate, baffled in his first purpose of staying the expedition, determined to accompany it in person, that he might prevent, if possible, by his presence, an open rupture between the parties.[13]

The squadron consisted of eighteen vessels, large and small. It carried nine hundred men, eighty of whom were cavalry, eighty more arquebusiers, one hundred and fifty crossbowmen, with a number of heavy guns, and a large supply of ammunition and military stores. There were, besides, a thousand Indians, natives of the island, who went, probably, in a menial capacity.[14] So gallant an armada—with one excep-

[13] Parecer del Lic. Ayllon al Adelantado Diego Velasquez, Isla Fernandina, 1520, MS.

[14] Relacion del Lic. Ayllon, Santo Domingo, 30 de Agosto, 1520, MS. —Processo y Pesquiza por la Real Audiencia, MS.—According to

tion[15]—never before rode in the Indian seas. None to compare with it had ever been fitted out in the Western World.

Leaving Cuba early in March, 1520, Narvaez held nearly the same course as Cortés, and running down what was then called the "island of Yucatan,"[16] after a heavy tempest, in which some of his smaller vessels foundered, anchored, April 23, off San Juan de Ulua. It was the place where Cortés, also, had first landed; the sandy waste covered by the present city of Vera Cruz.

Here the commander met with a Spaniard, one of those sent by the general from Mexico to ascertain the resources of the country, especially its mineral products. This man came on board the fleet, and from him the Spaniards gathered the particulars of all that had occurred since the departure of the envoys from Vera Cruz,—the march into the interior, the bloody battles with the Tlascalans, the occupation of Mexico, the rich treasures found in it, and the seizure of the monarch, by means of which, concluded the soldier, "Cortés rules over the land like its own sovereign, so that a Spaniard may travel unarmed from one end of the country to the other, without insult or injury."[17]

Diaz, the ordnance amounted to twenty cannon. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 109.

[15] The great fleet under Ovando, 1501, in which Cortés had intended to embark for the New World. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 1, lib. 4, cap. 11.

[16] "De allí seguímos el viage por toda la costa de la Isla de Yucatan." Relacion del Lic. Ayllon, MS.

[17] "La cual tierra sabe é ha visto este testigo, que el dicho Hernando Cortés tiene pacífica, é le sirven é obedecen todos los Indios; é que

His audience listened to this marvellous report with speechless amazement, and the loyal indignation of Narvaez waxed stronger and stronger, as he learned the value of the prize which had been snatched from his employer.

He now openly proclaimed his intention to march against Cortés and punish him for his rebellion. He made this vaunt so loudly, that the natives, who had flocked in numbers to the camp, which was soon formed on shore, clearly comprehended that the new-comers were not friends, but enemies, of the preceding. Narvaez determined, also,—though in opposition to the counsel of the Spaniard, who quoted the example of Cortés,—to establish a settlement on this unpromising spot; and he made the necessary arrangements to organize a municipality. He was informed by the soldier of the existence of the neighboring colony at Villa Rica, commanded by Sandoval, and consisting of a few invalids, who, he was assured, would surrender on the first summons. Instead of marching against the place, however, he determined to send a peaceful embassy to display his powers and demand the submission of the garrison.[18]

These successive steps gave serious displeasure to

cree este testigo que lo hacen por cabsa que el dicho Hernando Cortés tiene preso á un Cacique que dicen Montesuma, que es Señor de lo mas de la tierra, á lo que este testigo alcanza, al cual los Indios obedecen, é fucen lo que les manda, é los Cristianos andan por toda esta tierra seguros, é un solo Cristiano la ha atravesado toda sin temor." Processo y Pesquiza hecha por la Real Audiencia de la Española, MS.

[18] Relacion del Lic. Ayllon, MS.—Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.

Ayllon, who saw they must lead to inevitable collision with Cortés. But it was in vain he remonstrated and threatened to lay the proceedings of Narvaez before the government. The latter, chafed by his continued opposition and sour rebuke, determined to rid himself of a companion who acted as a spy on his movements. He caused him to be seized and sent back to Cuba. The licentiate had the address to persuade the captain of the vessel to change her destination for St. Domingo; and, when he arrived there, a formal report of his proceedings, exhibiting in strong colors the disloyal conduct of the governor and his lieutenant, was prepared, and despatched by the Royal Audience to Spain.[19]

Sandoval meanwhile had not been inattentive to the movements of Narvaez. From the time of his first appearance on the coast, that vigilant officer, distrusting the object of the armament, had kept his eye on him. No sooner was he apprised of the landing of the Spaniards, than the commander of Villa Rica sent off his few disabled soldiers to a place of safety in the neighborhood. He then put his works in the best posture of defence that he could, and prepared to maintain the place to the last extremity. His men promised to stand by him, and, the more effectually to fortify the resolution of any who might falter, he ordered a gallows to be set up in a conspicuous part of

[19] This report is to be found among the MSS. of Vargas Ponçe, in the archives of the Royal Academy of History. It embraces a hundred and ten folio pages, and is entitled "El Processo y Pesquiza hecha por la Real Audiencia de la Española é tierra nuevamente descubierta, Para el Consejo de su Majestad."

the town! The constancy of his men was not put to the trial.

The only invaders of the place were a priest, a notary, and four other Spaniards, selected for the mission, already noticed, by Narvaez. The ecclesiastic's name was Guevara. On coming before Sandoval, he made him a formal address, in which he pompously enumerated the services and claims of Velasquez, taxed Cortés and his adherents with rebellion, and demanded of Sandoval to tender his submission, as a loyal subject, to the newly constituted authority of Narvaez.

The commander of La Villa Rica was so much incensed at this unceremonious mention of his companions in arms that he assured the reverend envoy that nothing but respect for his cloth saved him from the chastisement he merited. Guevara now waxed wroth in his turn, and called on the notary to read the proclamation. But Sandoval interposed, promising that functionary that if he attempted to do so, without first producing a warrant of his authority from the crown, he should be soundly flogged. Guevara lost all command of himself at this, and, stamping on the ground, repeated his orders in a more peremptory tone than before. Sandoval was not a man of many words. He simply remarked that the instrument should be read to the general himself in Mexico. At the same time, he ordered his men to procure a number of sturdy *tamanes*, or Indian porters, on whose backs the unfortunate priest and his companions were bound like so many bales of goods. They were then placed under a guard of twenty Spaniards, and the whole caravan

took its march for the capital. Day and night they travelled, stopping only to obtain fresh relays of carriers; and as they passed through populous towns, forests, and cultivated fields, vanishing as soon as seen, the Spaniards, bewildered by the strangeness of the scene, as well as of their novel mode of conveyance, hardly knew whether they were awake or in a dream. In this way, at the end of the fourth day, they reached the Tezcucan lake in view of the Aztec capital.[20]

Its inhabitants had already been made acquainted with the fresh arrival of white men on the coast. Indeed, directly on their landing, intelligence had been communicated to Montezuma, who is said (it does not seem probable) to have concealed it some days from Cortés.[21] At length, inviting him to an interview, he told him there was no longer any obstacle to his leaving the country, as a fleet was ready for him. To the inquiries of the astonished general, Montezuma replied by pointing to a hieroglyphical map sent him from the coast, on which the ships, the Spaniards themselves, and their whole equipment were minutely delineated. Cortés, suppressing all emotions but those of pleasure, exclaimed, "Blessed be the Redeemer for his mercies!" On returning to his quarters, the tidings were received by the troops with loud shouts, the firing of cannon,

[20] "É iban espantados de que veian tâtas ciudades y pueblos grandes, que les traian de comer, y vnos los dexavan, y otros los tomavan, y andar por su camino. Dizẽ que iban pensando si era en cantamiento, ó sueño." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. III.—Demanda de Zavallos, MS.

[21] "Ya auia tres dias que lo sabia el Monteçuma, y Cortés no sabia cosa ninguna." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. IIO.

and other demonstrations of joy. They hailed the new-comers as a reinforcement from Spain. Not so their commander. From the first, he suspected them to be sent by his enemy, the governor of Cuba. He communicated his suspicions to his officers, through whom they gradually found their way among the men. The tide of joy was instantly checked. Alarming apprehensions succeeded, as they dwelt on the probability of this suggestion and on the strength of the invaders. Yet their constancy did not desert them; and they pledged themselves to remain true to their cause, and, come what might, to stand by their leader. It was one of those occasions that proved the entire influence which Cortés held over these wild adventurers. All doubts were soon dispelled by the arrival of the prisoners from Villa Rica.

One of the convoy, leaving the party in the suburbs, entered the city, and delivered a letter to the general from Sandoval, acquainting him with all the particulars. Cortés instantly sent to the prisoners, ordered them to be released, and furnished them with horses to make their entrance into the capital,—a more creditable conveyance than the backs of *tamanes*. On their arrival, he received them with marked courtesy, apologized for the rude conduct of his officers, and seemed desirous by the most assiduous attentions to soothe the irritation of their minds. He showed his good will still further by lavishing presents on Guevara and his associates, until he gradually wrought such a change in their dispositions that from enemies he converted them into friends, and drew forth many important particulars respecting not merely the designs of their

leader, but the feelings of his army. The soldiers, in general, they said, far from desiring a rupture with those of Cortés, would willingly co-operate with them, were it not for their commander. They had no feelings of resentment to gratify. Their object was gold. The personal influence of Narvaez was not great, and his arrogance and penurious temper had already gone far to alienate from him the affections of his followers. These hints were not lost on the general.

He addressed a letter to his rival in the most conciliatory terms. He besought him not to proclaim their animosity to the world, and, by kindling a spirit of insubordination in the natives, unsettle all that had been so far secured. A violent collision must be prejudicial even to the victor, and might be fatal to both. It was only in union that they could look for success. He was ready to greet Narvaez as a brother in arms, to share with him the fruits of conquest, and, if he could produce a royal commission, to submit to his authority. Cortés well knew he had no such commission to show.[22]

Soon after the departure of Guevara and his comrades,[23] the general determined to send a special envoy of his own. The person selected for this delicate office was Father Olmedo, who, through the campaign, had shown a practical good sense, and a talent for affairs, not always to be found in persons of his spiritual call-

[22] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 117–120.

[23] "Our commander said so many kind things to them," says Diaz, "and *anointed their fingers* so plentifully with gold, that, though they came like roaring lions, they went home perfectly tame!" Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 111.

ing. He was intrusted with another epistle to Narvaez, of similar import with the preceding. Cortés wrote, also, to the licentiate Ayllon, with whose departure he was not acquainted, and to Andres de Duero, former secretary of Velasquez, and his own friend, who had come over in the present fleet. Olmedo was instructed to converse with these persons in private, as well as with the principal officers and soldiers, and, as far as possible, to infuse into them a spirit of accommodation. To give greater weight to his arguments, he was furnished with a liberal supply of gold.

During this time, Narvaez had abandoned his original design of planting a colony on the sea-coast, and had crossed the country to Cempoalla, where he had taken up his quarters. He was here when Guevara returned and presented the letter of Cortés.

Narvaez glanced over it with a look of contempt, which was changed into one of stern displeasure as his envoy enlarged on the resources and formidable character of his rival, counselling him by all means to accept his proffers of amity. A different effect was produced on the troops, who listened with greedy ears to the accounts given of Cortés, his frank and liberal manners, which they involuntarily contrasted with those of their own commander, the wealth in his camp, where the humblest private could stake his ingot and chain of gold at play, where all revelled in plenty, and the life of the soldier seemed to be one long holiday. Guevara had been admitted only to the sunny side of the picture.

The impression made by these accounts was confirmed by the presence of Olmedo. The ecclesiastic delivered

his missives, in like manner, to Narvaez, who ran through their contents with feelings of anger which found vent in the most opprobrious invectives against his rival; while one of his captains, named Salvatierra, openly avowed his intention to cut off the rebel's ears and broil them for his breakfast![24] Such impotent sallies did not alarm the stout-hearted friar, who soon entered into communication with many of the officers and soldiers, whom he found better inclined to an accommodation. His insinuating eloquence, backed by his liberal largesses, gradually opened a way into their hearts, and a party was formed, under the very eye of their chief, better affected to his rival's interests than to his own. The intrigue could not be conducted so secretly as wholly to elude the suspicions of Narvaez, who would have arrested Olmedo and placed him under confinement, but for the interposition of Duero. He put a stop to his further machinations by sending him back again to his master. But the poison was left to do its work.

Narvaez made the same vaunt as at his landing, of his design to march against Cortés and apprehend him as a traitor. The Cempoallans learned with astonishment that their new guests, though the countrymen, were enemies of their former. Narvaez, also, proclaimed his intention to release Montezuma from captivity and restore him to his throne. It is said he received a rich present from the Aztec emperor, who entered into a correspondence with him.[25] That Mon-

[24] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 112.

[25] Ibid., cap. 111.—Oviedo says that Montezuma called a council of his nobles, in which it was decided to let the troops of Narvaez

tezuma should have treated him with his usual munificence, supposing him to be the friend of Cortés, is very probable. But that he should have entered into a secret communication, hostile to the general's interests, is too repugnant to the whole tenor of his conduct to be lightly admitted.

These proceedings did not escape the watchful eye of Sandoval. He gathered the particulars partly from deserters who fled to Villa Rica, and partly from his own agents, who in the disguise of natives mingled in the enemy's camp. He sent a full account of them to Cortés, acquainted him with the growing defection of the Indians, and urged him to take speedy measures for the defence of Villa Rica if he would not see it fall into the enemy's hands. The general felt that it was time to act.

Yet the selection of the course to be pursued was embarrassing in the extreme. If he remained in Mexico and awaited there the attack of his rival, it would give the latter time to gather round him the whole forces of the empire, including those of the capital itself, all willing, no doubt, to serve under the banners of a chief who proposed the liberation of their master. The odds were too great to be hazarded.

If he marched against Narvaez, he must either abandon the city and the emperor, the fruit of all his toils and triumphs, or, by leaving a garrison to hold

into the capital, and then to crush them at one blow, with those of Cortés! (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.) Considering the awe in which the latter alone were held by the Mexicans, a more improbable tale could not be devised. But nothing is too improbable for history,—though, according to Boileau's maxim, it may be for fiction.

them in awe, must cripple his strength, already far too weak to cope with that of his adversary. Yet on this latter course he decided. He trusted less, perhaps, to an open encounter of arms than to the influence of his personal address and previous intrigues, to bring about an amicable arrangement. But he prepared himself for either result.

In the preceding chapter it was mentioned that Velasquez de Leon was sent with a hundred and fifty men to plant a colony on one of the great rivers emptying into the Mexican Gulf. Cortés, on learning the arrival of Narvaez, had despatched a messenger to his officer, to acquaint him with the fact and to arrest his further progress. But Velasquez had already received notice of it from Narvaez himself, who, in a letter written soon after his landing, had adjured him in the name of his kinsman, the governor of Cuba, to quit the banners of Cortés and come over to him. That officer, however, had long since buried the feelings of resentment which he had once nourished against his general, to whom he was now devotedly attached, and who had honored him throughout the campaign with particular regard. Cortés had early seen the importance of securing this cavalier to his interests. Without waiting for orders, Velasquez abandoned his expedition, and commenced a countermarch on the capital, when he received the general's commands to await him in Cholula.

Cortés had also sent to the distant province of Chinantla, situated far to the southeast of Cholula, for a reinforcement of two thousand natives. They were a bold race, hostile to the Mexicans, and had offered their services to him since his residence in the metrop-

olis. They used a long spear in battle, longer, indeed, than that borne by the Spanish or German infantry. Cortés ordered three hundred of their double-headed lances to be made for him, and to be tipped with copper instead of *itztli*. With this formidable weapon he proposed to foil the cavalry of his enemy.

The command of the garrison in his absence he intrusted to Pedro de Alvarado,—the *Tonatiuh* of the Mexicans,—a man possessed of many commanding qualities, of an intrepid though somewhat arrogant spirit, and his warm personal friend. He inculcated on him moderation and forbearance. He was to keep a close watch on Montezuma, for on the possession of the royal person rested all their authority in the land. He was to show him the deference alike due to his high station and demanded by policy. He was to pay uniform respect to the usages and the prejudices of the people; remembering that though his small force would be large enough to overawe them in times of quiet, yet should they be once roused it would be swept away like chaff before the whirlwind.

From Montezuma he exacted a promise to maintain the same friendly relations with his lieutenant which he had preserved towards himself. This, said Cortés, would be most grateful to his own master, the Spanish sovereign. Should the Aztec prince do otherwise, and lend himself to any hostile movement, he must be convinced that he would fall the first victim of it.

The emperor assured him of his continued good will. He was much perplexed, however, by the recent events. Were the Spaniards at his court, or those just landed, the true representatives of their sovereign? Cortés,

who had hitherto maintained a reserve on the subject, now told him that the latter were indeed his countrymen, but traitors to his master. As such, it was his painful duty to march against them, and, when he had chastised their rebellion, he should return, before his departure from the land, in triumph to the capital. Montezuma offered to support him with five thousand Aztec warriors; but the general declined it, not choosing to encumber himself with a body of doubtful, perhaps disaffected, auxiliaries.

He left in garrison, under Alvarado, one hundred and forty men, two-thirds of his whole force.[86] With these remained all the artillery, the greater part of the little body of horse, and most of the arquebusiers. He took with him only seventy soldiers, but they were men of the most mettle in the army and his stanch adherents. They were lightly armed, and encumbered with as little baggage as possible. Everything depended on celerity of movement.

Montezuma, in his royal litter borne on the shoulders of his nobles, and escorted by the whole Spanish infantry, accompanied the general to the causeway. There, embracing him in the most cordial manner,

[86] In the Mexican edition of the letters of Cortés, it is called five hundred men. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 122.) But this was more than his whole Spanish force. In Ramusio's version of the same letter, printed as early as 1565, the number is stated as in the text. (Navigationi et Viaggi, fol. 244.) In an instrument without date, containing the affidavits of certain witnesses as to the management of the royal fifth by Cortés, it is said there were one hundred and fifty soldiers left in the capital under Alvarado. (Probanza fecha en la nueva España del mar océano á pedimento de Juan Ochoa de Lexalde, en nombre de Hernando Cortés, MS.) The account in the Mexican edition is unquestionably an error.

they parted, with all the external marks of mutual regard. It was about the middle of May, 1520, more than six months since the entrance of the Spaniards into Mexico. During this time they had lorded it over the land with absolute sway. They were now leaving the city in hostile array, not against an Indian foe, but their own countrymen. It was the beginning of a long career of calamity,—checkered, indeed, by occasional triumphs,—which was yet to be run before the Conquest could be completed.[27]

[27] Carta de la Villa de Vera Cruz á el Emperador, MS. This letter without date was probably written in 1520.—See, also, for the preceding pages, Probanza fecha á pedimento de Juan Ochoa, MS.,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 9, cap. 1, 21; lib. 10, cap. 1,—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 119, 120,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 112–115,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

CHAPTER VII.

CORTÉS DESCENDS FROM THE TABLE-LAND.—NEGOTIATES WITH NARVAEZ. — PREPARES TO ASSAULT HIM.—QUARTERS OF NARVAEZ.—ATTACK BY NIGHT. —NARVAEZ DEFEATED.

1520.

TRAVERSING the southern causeway, by which they had entered the capital, the little party were soon on their march across the beautiful Valley. They climbed the mountain screen which Nature had so ineffectually drawn around it, passed between the huge volcanoes that, like faithless watch-dogs on their posts, have long since been buried in slumber, threaded the intricate defiles where they had before experienced such bleak and tempestuous weather, and, emerging on the other side, descended the western slope which opens on the wide expanse of the fruitful plateau of Cholula.

They heeded little of what they saw on their rapid march, nor whether it was cold or hot. The anxiety of their minds made them indifferent to outward annoyances; and they had fortunately none to encounter from the natives, for the name of Spaniard was in itself a charm,—a better guard than helm or buckler to the bearer.

In Cholula, Cortés had the inexpressible satisfaction of meeting Velasquez de Leon, with the hundred

and twenty soldiers intrusted to his command for the formation of a colony. That faithful officer had been some time at Cholula, waiting for the general's approach. Had he failed, the enterprise of Cortés must have failed also.[1] The idea of resistance, with his own handful of followers, would have been chimerical. As it was, his little band was now trebled, and acquired a confidence in proportion.

Cordially embracing their companions in arms, now knit together more closely than ever by the sense of a great and common danger, the combined troops traversed with quick step the streets of the sacred city, where many a dark pile of ruins told of their disastrous visit on the preceding autumn. They kept the high-road to Tlascala, and, at not many leagues' distance from that capital, fell in with Father Olmedo and his companions on their return from the camp of Narvaez, to which, it will be remembered, they had been sent as envoys. The ecclesiastic bore a letter from that commander, in which he summoned Cortés and his followers to submit to his authority as captain-general of the country, menacing them with condign punishment in case of refusal or delay. Olmedo gave many curious particulars of the state of the enemy's camp. Narvaez he described as puffed up by authority, and negligent of precautions against a foe whom he held in contempt. He was surrounded by a number of pompous, conceited

[1] So says Oviedo,—and with truth: "Si aquel capitan Juan Velasquez de Leon no estubiera mal con su pariente Diego Velasquez, é se pasara con los 150 Hombres, que havia llevado á Guaçacalco, á la parte de Pánfilo de Narvaez su cuñado, acabado oviera Cortés su oficio." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

officers, who ministered to his vanity, and whose braggart tones the good father, who had an eye for the ridiculous, imitated, to the no small diversion of Cortés and the soldiers. Many of the troops, he said, showed no great partiality for their commander, and were strongly disinclined to a rupture with their countrymen; a state of feeling much promoted by the accounts they had received of Cortés, by his own arguments and promises, and by the liberal distribution of the gold with which he had been provided. In addition to these matters, Cortés gathered much important intelligence respecting the position of the enemy's force and his general plan of operations.

At Tlascala the Spaniards were received with a frank and friendly hospitality. It is not said whether any of the Tlascalan allies had accompanied them from Mexico. If they did, they went no farther than their native city. Cortés requested a reinforcement of six hundred fresh troops to attend him on his present expedition. It was readily granted; but, before the army had proceeded many miles on its route, the Indian auxiliaries fell off, one after another, and returned to their city. They had no personal feeling of animosity to gratify in the present instance, as in a war against Mexico. It may be, too, that, although intrepid in a contest with the bravest of the Indian races, they had had too fatal experience of the prowess of the white men to care to measure swords with them again. At any rate, they deserted in such numbers that Cortés dismissed the remainder at once, saying, good-humoredly, "He had rather part with them then than in the hour of trial."

The troops soon entered on that wild district in the neighborhood of Perote, strewed with the wreck of volcanic matter, which forms so singular a contrast to the general character of beauty with which the scenery is stamped. It was not long before their eyes were gladdened by the approach of Sandoval and about sixty soldiers from the garrison of Vera Cruz, including several deserters from the enemy. It was a most important reinforcement, not more on account of the numbers of the men than of the character of the commander, in every respect one of the ablest captains in the service. He had been compelled to fetch a circuit in order to avoid falling in with the enemy, and had forced his way through thick forests and wild mountain-passes, till he had fortunately, without accident, reached the appointed place of rendezvous and stationed himself once more under the banner of his chieftain.[2]

At the same place, also, Cortés was met by Tobillos, a Spaniard whom he had sent to procure the lances from Chinantla. They were perfectly well made, after the pattern which had been given,—double-headed spears, tipped with copper, and of great length. Tobillos drilled the men in the exercise of this weapon, the formidable uses of which, especially against horse, had been fully demonstrated, towards the close of the last century, by the Swiss battalions, in their encounters with the Burgundian chivalry, the best in Europe.[3]

[2] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 123, 124.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 115–117.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

[3] But, although irresistible against cavalry, the long pike of the German proved no match for the short sword and buckler of the Spaniard,

Cortés now took a review of his army,—if so paltry a force may be called an army,—and found their numbers were two hundred and sixty-six, only five of whom were mounted. A few muskets and cross-bows were sprinkled among them. In defensive armor they were sadly deficient. They were for the most part cased in the quilted doublet of the country, thickly stuffed with cotton, the *escaupil*, recommended by its superior lightness, but which, though competent to turn the arrow of the Indian, was ineffectual against a musket-ball. Most of this cotton mail was exceedingly out of repair, giving evidence, in its unsightly gaps, of much rude service and hard blows. Few, in this emergency, but would have given almost any price—the best of the gold chains which they wore in tawdry display over their poor habiliments—for a steel morion or cuirass, to take the place of their own hacked and battered armor.[4]

Under this coarse covering, however, they bore hearts stout and courageous as ever beat in human bosoms. For they were the heroes, still invincible, of many a hard-fought field, where the odds had been incalculably against them. They had large experience of the country and of the natives, and knew well the character of their own commander, under whose eye they had been trained till every movement was in obedience to him. The whole body seemed to con-

in the great battle of Ravenna, fought a few years before this, 1512. Machiavelli makes some excellent reflections on the comparative merit of these arms. Arte della Guerra, lib. 2, ap. Opere, tom. iv. p. 67.

4 Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 118.—"Tambien quiero dezir la gran necessidad que teniamos de armas, que por vn peto, ó capacete, ó casco, ó babera de hierro, dieramos aquella noche quãto nos pidiera por ello, y todo quãto auiamos ganado." Cap. 122.

stitute but a single individual, in respect of unity of design and of action. Thus its real effective force was incredibly augmented; and, what was no less important, the humblest soldier felt it to be so.

The troops now resumed their march across the table-land, until, reaching the eastern slope, their labors were lightened, as they descended towards the broad plains of the *tierra caliente*, spread out like a boundless ocean of verdure below them. At some fifteen leagues' distance from Cempoalla, where Narvaez, as has been noticed, had established his quarters, they were met by another embassy from that commander. It consisted of the priest, Guevara, Andres de Duero, and two or three others. Duero, the fast friend of Cortés, had been the person most instrumental, originally, in obtaining him his commission from Velasquez. They now greeted each other with a warm embrace, and it was not till after much preliminary conversation on private matters that the secretary disclosed the object of his visit.

He bore a letter from Narvaez, couched in terms somewhat different from the preceding. That officer required, indeed, the acknowledgment of his paramount authority in the land, but offered his vessels to transport all, who desired it, from the country, together with their treasures and effects, without molestation or inquiry. The more liberal tenor of these terms was, doubtless, to be ascribed to the influence of Duero. The secretary strongly urged Cortés to comply with them, as the most favorable that could be obtained, and as the only alternative affording him a chance of safety in his desperate condition. "For, however

valiant your men may be, how can they expect," he asked, "to face a force so much superior in numbers and equipment as that of their antagonist?" But Cortés had set his fortunes on the cast, and he was not the man to shrink from it. "If Narvaez bears a royal commission," he returned, "I will readily submit to him. But he has produced none. He is a deputy of my rival, Velasquez. For myself, I am a servant of the king; I have conquered the country for him; and for him I and my brave followers will defend it, be assured, to the last drop of our blood. If we fall, it will be glory enough to have perished in the discharge of our duty."[5]

His friend might have been somewhat puzzled to comprehend how the authority of Cortés rested on a different ground from that of Narvaez; and if they both held of the same superior, the governor of Cuba, why that dignitary should not be empowered to supersede his own officer, in case of dissatisfaction, and appoint a substitute.[6] But Cortés here reaped the full benefit

[5] "Yo les respondí, que no via provision de Vuestra Alteza, por donde le debiesse entregar la Tierra; é que si alguna trahia, que la presentasse ante mí, y ante el Cabildo de la Vera Cruz, segun órden, y costumbre de España, y que yo estaba presto de la obedecer, y cumplir; y que hasta tanto, por ningun interese, ni partido haria lo que él decia; ántes yo, y los que conmigo estaban, moririamos en defensa de la Tierra, pues la habiamos ganado, y tenido por Vuestra Magestad pacífica, y segura, y por no ser Traydores y desleales á nuestro Rey. . . . Considerando, que morir en servicio de mi Rey, y por defender, y amparar sus Tierras, y no las dejar usurpar, á mí, y á los de mi Compañía se nos seguia farta gloria." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 125–127.

[6] Such are the natural reflections of Oviedo, speculating on the matter some years later. 'É tambien que me parece donaire, ó no

of that legal fiction, if it may be so termed, by which his commission, resigned to the self-constituted municipality of Vera Cruz, was again derived through that body from the crown. The device, indeed, was too palpable to impose on any but those who chose to be blinded. Most of the army were of this number. To them it seemed to give additional confidence, in the same manner as a strip of painted canvas, when substituted, as it has sometimes been, for a real parapet of stone, has been found not merely to impose on the enemy, but to give a sort of artificial courage to the defenders concealed behind it.[7]

Duero had arranged with his friend in Cuba, when he took command of the expedition, that he himself was to have a liberal share of the profits. It is said that Cortés confirmed this arrangement at the present juncture, and made it clearly for the other's interest that he should prevail in the struggle with Narvaez. This was an important point, considering the position of the secretary.[8] From this authentic source the general derived much information respecting the designs of Narvaez, which had escaped the knowledge of

bastante la escusa que Cortés da para fundar é justificar su negocio, que es decir, que el Narvaez presentase las provisiones que llevaba de S. M. Como si el dicho Cortés oviera ido á aquella tierra por mandado de S. M. ó con mas, ni tanta autoridad como llebaba Narvaez; pues que es claro é notorio, que el Adelantado Diego Velasquez, que embió á Cortés, era parte, segun derecho, para le embiar á remover, y el Cortés obligado á le obedecer. No quiero decir mas en esto por no ser odioso á ninguna de las partes." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

[7] More than one example of this *ruse* is mentioned by Mariana in Spanish history, though the precise passages have escaped my memory.

[8] Bernal Diaz. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 119.

Olmedo. On the departure of the envoys, Cortés intrusted them with a letter for his rival, a counterpart of that which he had received from him. This show of negotiation intimated a desire on his part to postpone, if not avoid, hostilities, which might the better put Narvaez off his guard. In the letter he summoned that commander and his followers to present themselves before him without delay, and to acknowledge his authority as the representative of his sovereign. He should otherwise be compelled to proceed against them as rebels to the crown![9] With this missive, the vaunting tone of which was intended quite as much for his own troops as the enemy, Cortés dismissed the envoys. They returned to disseminate among their comrades their admiration of the general, and of his unbounded liberality, of which he took care they should experience full measure, and they dilated on the riches of his adherents, who, over their wretched attire, displayed, with ostentatious profusion, jewels, ornaments of gold, collars, and massive chains winding several times round their necks and bodies, the rich spoil of the treasury of Montezuma.

The army now took its way across the level plains of the *tierra caliente*, on which Nature has exhausted

[9] "É assimismo mandaba, y mandé por el dicho Mandamiento á todas las Personas, que con el dicho Narvaez estaban, que no tubiessen, ni obedeciessen al dicho Narvaez por tal Capitan, ni Justicia; ántes, dentro de cierto término, que en el dicho Mandamiento señalé, pareciessen ante mí, para que yo les dijesse, lo que debian hacer en servicio de Vuestra Alteza: con protestacion, que lo contrario haciendo, procederia contra ellos, como contra Traydores, y aleves, y malos Vasallos, que se rebelaban contra su Rey, y quieren usurpar sus Tierras, y Señoríos." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 127.

all the wonders of creation; it was covered more thickly then than at the present day with noble forests, where the towering cottonwood-tree, the growth of ages, stood side by side with the light bamboo or banana, the product of a season, each in its way attesting the marvellous fecundity of the soil, while innumerable creeping flowers, muffling up the giant branches of the trees, waved in bright festoons above their heads, loading the air with odors. But the senses of the Spaniards were not open to the delicious influences of nature. Their minds were occupied by one idea.

Coming upon an open reach of meadow, of some extent, they were at length stopped by a river, or rather stream, called *Rio de Canoas*, "the River of Canoes," of no great volume ordinarily, but swollen at this time by excessive rains. It had rained hard that day, although at intervals the sun had broken forth with intolerable fervor, affording a good specimen of those alternations of heat and moisture which give such activity to vegetation in the tropics, where the process of forcing seems to be always going on.

The river was about a league distant from the camp of Narvaez. Before seeking out a practicable ford by which to cross it, Cortés allowed his men to recruit their exhausted strength by stretching themselves on the ground. The shades of evening had gathered round; and the rising moon, wading through dark masses of cloud, shone with a doubtful and interrupted light. It was evident that the storm had not yet spent its fury.[10] Cortés did not regret this. He had made

[10] "Y aun llouia de rato en rato, y entonces salia la Luna, que quãdo allí llegámos hazia muy escuro, y llouia, y tambien la escuridad ayudó." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.

up his mind to an assault that very night, and in the darkness and uproar of the tempest his movements would be most effectually concealed.

Before disclosing his design, he addressed his men in one of those stirring, soldierly harangues to which he had recourse in emergencies of great moment, as if to sound the depths of their hearts, and, where any faltered, to reanimate them with his own heroic spirit. He briefly recapitulated the great events of the campaign, the dangers they had surmounted, the victories they had achieved over the most appalling odds, the glorious spoil they had won. But of this they were now to be defrauded; not by men holding a legal warrant from the crown, but by adventurers, with no better title than that of superior force. They had established a claim on the gratitude of their country and their sovereign. This claim was now to be dishonored, their very services were converted into crimes, and their names branded with infamy as those of traitors. But the time had at last come for vengeance. God would not desert the soldier of the Cross. Those whom he had carried victorious through greater dangers would not be left to fail now. And, if they should fail, better to die like brave men on the field of battle, than, with fame and fortune cast away, to perish ignominiously like slaves on the gibbet. This last point he urged home upon his hearers; well knowing there was not one among them so dull as not to be touched by it.

They responded with hearty acclamations, and Velasquez de Leon, and de Lugo, in the name of the rest, assured their commander, if they failed, it should be

his fault, not theirs. They would follow wherever he led. The general was fully satisfied with the temper of his soldiers, as he felt that his difficulty lay not in awakening their enthusiasm, but in giving it a right direction. One thing is remarkable. He made no allusion to the defection which he knew existed in the enemy's camp. He would have his soldiers, in this last pinch, rely on nothing but themselves.

He announced his purpose to attack the enemy that very night, when he should be buried in slumber, and the friendly darkness might throw a veil over their own movements and conceal the poverty of their numbers. To this the troops, jaded though they were by incessant marching, and half famished, joyfully assented. In their situation, suspense was the worst of evils. He next distributed the commands among his captains. To Gonzalo de Sandoval he assigned the important office of taking Narvaez. He was commanded, as *alguacil mayor*, to seize the person of that officer as a rebel to his sovereign, and, if he made resistance, to kill him on the spot.[11] He was provided with sixty picked men to aid him in this difficult task, supported by several of the ablest captains, among whom were two of the Alvarados, de Avila, and Ordaz. The largest division

[11] The Attorney of Narvaez, in his complaint before the crown, expatiates on the diabolical enormity of these instructions. "El dho Fernando Corttés como traidor aleboso, sin apercibir al dho mi partte, con un diabólico pensam^to^ é infernal osadía, en contemtto é menosprecio de V. M. ó de sus provisiones R.^s^, no mirando ni asattando la lealtad q^e^ debia á V. M., el dho Corttés dió un Mandamientto al dho Gonzalo de Sandobal para que prendiese al dho Pánfilo de Narvaez, é si se defendiese q^e^ lo mattase." Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.

of the force was placed under Cristóval de Olid, or, according to some authorities, of Pizarro, one of that family so renowned in the subsequent conquest of Peru. He was to get possession of the artillery, and to cover the assault of Sandoval by keeping those of the enemy at bay who would interfere with it. Cortés reserved only a body of twenty men for himself, to act on any point that occasion might require. The watch-word was *Espíritu Santo*, it being the evening of Whitsunday. Having made these arrangements, he prepared to cross the river.[12]

During the interval thus occupied by Cortés, Narvaez had remained at Cempoalla, passing his days in idle and frivolous amusement. From this he was at length roused, after the return of Duero, by the remonstrances of the old cacique of the city. "Why are you so heedless?" exclaimed the latter; "do you think Malinche is so? Depend on it, he knows your situation exactly, and, when you least dream of it, he will be upon you."[13]

Alarmed at these suggestions and those of his friends, Narvaez at length put himself at the head of his troops, and, on the very day on which Cortés arrived at the River of Canoes, sallied out to meet him. But, when he had reached this barrier, Narvaez saw no sign of an enemy. The rain, which fell in torrents, soon drenched

[12] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12, 47.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 1.

[13] "Que hazeis, que estais mui descuidado? pensais que Malinche, y los Teules que trae cõsigo, que son assí como vosotros? Pues yo os digo, que quãdo no os cataredes, será aquí, y os matará." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 121.

the soldiers to the skin. Made somewhat effeminate by their long and luxurious residence at Cempoalla, they murmured at their uncomfortable situation. "Of what use was it to remain there fighting with the elements? There was no sign of an enemy, and little reason to apprehend his approach in such tempestuous weather. It would be wiser to return to Cempoalla, and in the morning they should be all fresh for action, should Cortés make his appearance."

Narvaez took counsel of these advisers, or rather of his own inclinations. Before retracing his steps, he provided against surprise by stationing a couple of sentinels at no great distance from the river, to give notice of the approach of Cortés. He also detached a body of forty horse in another direction, by which he thought it not improbable the enemy might advance on Cempoalla. Having taken these precautions, he fell back again before night on his own quarters.

He there occupied the principal *teocalli*. It consisted of a stone building on the usual pyramidal basis; and the ascent was by a flight of steep steps on one of the faces of the pyramid. In the edifice or sanctuary above he stationed himself with a strong party of arquebusiers and crossbowmen. Two other *teocallis* in the same area were garrisoned by large detachments of infantry. His artillery, consisting of seventeen or eighteen small guns, he posted in the area below, and protected it by the remainder of his cavalry. When he had thus distributed his forces, he returned to his own quarters, and soon after to repose, with as much indifference as if his rival had been on the other side of the Atlantic, instead of a neighboring stream.

That stream was now converted by the deluge of waters into a furious torrent. It was with difficulty that a practicable ford could be found. The slippery stones, rolling beneath the feet, gave way at every step. The difficulty of the passage was much increased by the darkness and driving tempest. Still, with their long pikes, the Spaniards contrived to make good their footing,—at least, all but two, who were swept down by the fury of the current. When they had reached the opposite side, they had new impediments to encounter, in traversing a road, never good, now made doubly difficult by the deep mire, and the tangled brushwood with which it was overrun.

Here they met with a cross, which had been raised by them on their former march into the interior. They hailed it as a good omen; and Cortés, kneeling before the blessed sign, confessed his sins, and declared his great object to be the triumph of the holy Catholic faith. The army followed his example, and, having made a general confession, received absolution from Father Olmedo, who invoked the blessing of Heaven on the warriors who had consecrated their swords to the glory of the Cross. Then rising up and embracing one another, as companions in the good cause, they found themselves wonderfully invigorated and refreshed. The incident is curious, and well illustrates the character of the time,—in which war, religion, and rapine were so intimately blended together. Adjoining the road was a little coppice; and Cortés, and the few who had horses, dismounting, fastened the animals to the trees, where they might find some shelter from the storm. They deposited there, too, their baggage,

and such superfluous articles as would encumber their movements. The general then gave them a few last words of advice. "Everything," said he, "depends on obedience. Let no man, from desire of distinguishing himself, break his ranks. On silence, despatch, and, above all, obedience to your officers, the success of our enterprise depends."

Silently and stealthily they held on their way, without beat of drum or sound of trumpet, when they suddenly came on the two sentinels who had been stationed by Narvaez to give notice of their approach. This had been so noiseless that the vedettes were both of them surprised on their post, and one only, with difficulty, effected his escape. The other was brought before Cortés. Every effort was made to draw from him some account of the present position of Narvaez. But the man remained obstinately silent; and, though threatened with the gibbet, and having a noose actually drawn round his neck, his Spartan heroism was not to be vanquished. Fortunately, no change had taken place in the arrangements of Narvaez since the intelligence previously derived from Duero.

The other sentinel, who had escaped, carried the news of the enemy's approach to the camp. But his report was not credited by the lazy soldiers whose slumbers he had disturbed. "He had been deceived by his fears," they said, "and mistaken the noise of the storm and the waving of the bushes for the enemy. Cortés and his men were far enough on the other side of the river, which they would be slow to cross in such a night." Narvaez himself shared in the same blind

infatuation, and the discredited sentinel slunk abashed to his own quarters, vainly menacing them with the consequences of their incredulity.[14]

Cortés, not doubting that the sentinel's report must alarm the enemy's camp, quickened his pace. As he drew near, he discerned a light in one of the lofty towers of the city. "It is the quarters of Narvaez," he exclaimed to Sandoval, "and that light must be your beacon." On entering the suburbs, the Spaniards were surprised to find no one stirring, and no symptom of alarm. Not a sound was to be heard, except the measured tread of their own footsteps, half drowned in the howling of the tempest. Still they could not move so stealthily as altogether to elude notice, as they defiled through the streets of this populous city. The tidings were quickly conveyed to the enemy's quarters, where in an instant all was bustle and confusion. The trumpets sounded to arms. The dragoons sprang to their steeds, the artillery-men to their guns. Narvaez hastily buckled on his armor, called his men around him, and summoned those in the neighboring *teocallis* to join him in the area. He gave his orders with coolness; for, however wanting in prudence, he was not deficient in presence of mind, or courage.

All this was the work of a few minutes. But in those minutes the Spaniards had reached the avenue leading to the camp. Cortés ordered his men to keep close to the walls of the buildings, that the cannon-

[14] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 128.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 2, 3.

shot might pass between the two files.[15] No sooner had they presented themselves before the enclosure, than the artillery of Narvaez opened a general fire. Fortunately, the pieces were pointed so high that most of the balls passed over their heads, and three men only were struck down. They did not give the enemy time to reload. Cortés shouting the watch-word of the night, "Espíritu Santo! Espíritu Santo! Upon them!" in a moment Olid and his division rushed on the artillery-men, whom they pierced or knocked down with their pikes, and got possession of their guns. Another division engaged the cavalry, and made a diversion in favor of Sandoval, who with his gallant little band sprang up the great stairway of the temple. They were received with a shower of missiles,—arrows and musket-balls, which, in the hurried aim, and the darkness of the night, did little mischief. The next minute the assailants were on the platform, engaged hand to hand with their foes. Narvaez fought bravely in the midst, encouraging his followers. His standard-bearer fell by his side, run through the body. He himself received several wounds; for his short sword was no match for the long pikes of the assailants. At length he received a blow from a spear, which struck out his left eye. "Santa María!" exclaimed the unhappy man, "I am slain!" The cry was instantly taken up by the followers of Cortés, who shouted "Victory!"

[15] "Ya que se acercaban al Aposento de Narvaez, Cortés, que andaba reconociendo, i ordenando á todas partes, dixo á la Tropa de Sandoval: Señores, arrímaos á las dos aceras de la Calle, para que las balas del Artillería pasen por medio, sin hacer daño." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 3.

Disabled, and half mad with agony from his wound, Narvaez was withdrawn by his men into the sanctuary. The assailants endeavored to force an entrance, but it was stoutly defended. At length a soldier, getting possession of a torch or firebrand, flung it on the thatched roof, and in a few moments the combustible materials of which it was composed were in a blaze. Those within were driven out by the suffocating heat and smoke. A soldier named Farfan grappled with the wounded commander, and easily brought him to the ground; when he was speedily dragged down the steps, and secured with fetters. His followers, seeing the fate of their chief, made no further resistance.[16]

During this time, Cortés and the troops of Olid had been engaged with the cavalry, and had discomfited them, after some ineffectual attempts on the part of the latter to break through the dense array of pikes, by which several of their number were unhorsed and some of them slain. The general then prepared to assault the other *teocallis*, first summoning the garrisons to surrender. As they refused, he brought up the heavy guns to bear on them, thus turning the artillery against its own masters. He accompanied this menacing movement with offers of the most liberal import; an amnesty for the past, and a full participation in all the advantages of the Conquest. One of the garrisons was under the command of Salvatierra, the same officer who talked of cutting off the ears of Cortés. From the moment he had learned the fate of his own general, the hero was seized with a violent fit of illness which disabled

[16] Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

him from further action. The garrison waited only for one discharge of the ordnance, when they accepted the terms of capitulation. Cortés, it is said, received. on this occasion, support from an unexpected auxiliary. The air was filled with the *cocuyos*,—a species of large beetle which emits an intense phosphoric light from its body, strong enough to enable one to read by it. These wandering fires, seen in the darkness of the night, were converted, by the excited imaginations of the besieged, into an army with matchlocks! Such is the report of an eye-witness.[17] But the facility with which the enemy surrendered may quite as probably be referred to the cowardice of the commander, and the disaffection of the soldiers, not unwilling to come under the banners of Cortés.

The body of cavalry, posted, it will be remembered, by Narvaez on one of the roads to Cempoalla, to intercept his rival, having learned what had been passing, were not long in tendering their submission. Each of the soldiers in the conquered army was required, in token of his obedience, to deposit his arms in the hands of the alguacils, and to take the oaths to Cortés as Chief Justice and Captain-General of the colony.

The number of the slain is variously reported. It seems probable that not more than twelve perished on the side of the vanquished, and of the victors half that number. The small amount may be explained by the short duration of the action, and the random aim of

[17] "Como hazia tan escuro auia muchos cocayos (ansí los llaman en Cuba) que relumbrauan de noche, é los de Narvaez creyéron que erã muchas de las escopetas." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.

the missiles in the darkness. The number of the wounded was much more considerable.[18]

The field was now completely won. A few brief hours had sufficed to change the condition of Cortés from that of a wandering outlaw at the head of a handful of needy adventurers, a rebel with a price upon his head, to that of an independent chief, with a force at his disposal strong enough not only to secure his present conquests, but to open a career for still loftier ambition. While the air rung with the acclamations of the soldiery, the victorious general, assuming a deportment corresponding with his change of fortune, took his seat in a chair of state, and, with a rich, embroidered mantle thrown over his shoulders, received, one by one, the officers and soldiers, as they came to tender their congratulations. The privates were graciously permitted to kiss his hand. The officers he noticed with words of compliment or courtesy; and when Duero, Bermudez, the treasurer, and some others of the vanquished party, his old friends, presented themselves, he cordially embraced them.[19]

[18] Narvaez, or rather his attorney, swells the amount of slain on his own side much higher. But it was his cue to magnify the mischief sustained by his employer. The collation of this account with those of Cortés and his followers affords the best means of approximation to the truth. "É allí le mattáron quince hombres q^{e} muriéron de las feridas q^{e} les diéron é les quemáron seis hombres del dho Incendio q^{e} despues pareciéron las cabezas de ellos quemadas, é pusiéron á sacomano todo quantto ttenian los que benian con el dho mi partte como si fueran Moros y al dho mi partte robáron é saqueáron todos sus vienes, oro, é Platta é Joyas." Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.

[19] "Entre ellos venia Andres de Duero, y Agustin Bermudez, y muchos amigos de nuestro Capitã, y assí como veniã, ivan á besar las

Narvaez, Salvatierra, and two or three of the other hostile leaders were led before him in chains. It was a moment of deep humiliation for the former commander, in which the anguish of the body, however keen, must have been forgotten in that of the spirit. "You have great reason, Señor Cortés," said the discomfited warrior, "to thank Fortune for having given you the day so easily, and put me in your power." "I have much to be thankful for," replied the general; "but for my victory over you, I esteem it as one of the least of my achievements since my coming into the country!"[20] He then ordered the wounds of the prisoners to be cared for, and sent them under a strong guard to Vera Cruz.

Notwithstanding the proud humility of his reply, Cortés could scarcely have failed to regard his victory over Narvaez as one of the most brilliant achievements in his career. With a few scores of followers, badly clothed, worse fed, wasted by forced marches, under every personal disadvantage, deficient in weapons and

manos á Cortés, q̃ estaua sentado en vna silla de caderas, con vna ropa larga de color como narãjada, cõ sus armas debaxo, acõpañado de nosotros. Pues ver la gracia con que les hablaua, y abraçaua, y las palabras de tãtos cumplimiẽtos que les dezia, era cosa de ver que alegre estaua: y tenia mucha razon de verse en aquel pũto tan señor, y pujãte: y assí como le besauã la mano, se fuérõ cada vno á su posada." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.

[20] Ibid., loc. cit.—"Dixose que como Narvaez vido á Cortés estan lo así preso le dixo: Señor Cortés, tened en mucho la ventura que habeis tenido, é lo mucho que habeis hecho en tener mi persona, ó en tomar mi persona. É que Cortés le respondió, é dixo: Lo menos que yo he hecho en esta tierra donde estais, es haberos prendido: é luego le hizo poner á buen recaudo é le tubo mucho tiempo preso." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

military stores, he had attacked in their own quarters, routed, and captured the entire force of the enemy, thrice his superior in numbers, well provided with cavalry and artillery, admirably equipped, and complete in all the munitions of war! The amount of troops engaged on either side was, indeed, inconsiderable. But the proportions are not affected by this; and the relative strength of the parties made a result so decisive one of the most remarkable events in the annals of war.

It is true there were some contingencies on which the fortunes of the day depended, that could not be said to be entirely within his control. Something was the work of chance. If Velasquez de Leon, for example, had proved false, the expedition must have failed.[21] If the weather, on the night of the attack, had been fair, the enemy would have had certain notice of his approach, and been prepared for it. But

[21] Oviedo says that military men discussed whether Velasquez de Leon should have obeyed the commands of Cortés rather than those of his kinsman, the governor of Cuba. They decided in favor of the former, on the ground of his holding his commission immediately from him. "Visto he platicar sobre esto á caballeros é personas militares sobre si este Juan Velasquez de Leon hizo lo que debia, en acudir ó no á Diego Velasquez, ó al Pánfilo en su nombre; É combienen los veteranos mílites, é á mi parecer determinan bien la question, en que si Juan Velasquez tubo conducta de capitan para que con aquella Gente que él le dió ó toviese en aquella tierra como capitan particular le acudiese á él ó á quien le mandase. Juan Velasquez faltó á lo que era obligado en no pasar á Pánfilo de Narvaez siendo requerido de Diego Velasquez, mas si le hizo capitan Hernando Cortés, é le dió él la Gente, á él havia de acudir, como acudió, excepto si viera carta, á mandamiento expreso del Rey en contrario." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

these are the chances that enter more or less into every enterprise. He is the skilful general who knows how to turn them to account; to win the smiles of Fortune, and make even the elements fight on his side.

If Velasquez de Leon was, as it proved, the very officer whom the general should have trusted with the command, it was his sagacity which originally discerned this and selected him for it. It was his address that converted this dangerous foe into a friend, and one so fast that in the hour of need he chose rather to attach himself to his desperate fortunes than to those of the governor of Cuba, powerful as the latter was, and his near kinsman. It was the same address which gained Cortés such an ascendency over his soldiers and knit them to him so closely that in the darkest moment not a man offered to desert him.[22] If the success of the assault may be ascribed mainly to the dark and stormy weather which covered it, it was owing to him that he was in a condition to avail himself of this. The shortest possible time intervened between the conception of his plan and its execution. In a very few days he descended by extraordinary marches from the capital to the sea-coast. He came like a torrent from the mountains, pouring on the enemy's camp, and sweeping everything away, before a barrier could be raised to

[22] This ascendency the thoughtful Oviedo refers to his dazzling and liberal manners, so strongly contrasted with those of the governor of Cuba. "En lo demas valerosa persona ha seido, é para mucho; y este deseo de mandar juntamente con que fué mui bien partido é gratificador de los que le viniéron, fué mucha causa juntamente con ser mal quisto Diego Velasquez, para que Cortés se saliese con lo que emprendió, é se quedase en el oficio, é governacion." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

arrest it. This celerity of movement, the result of a clear head and determined will, has entered into the strategy of the greatest captains, and forms a prominent feature in their most brilliant military exploits. It was undoubtedly in the present instance a great cause of success.

But it would be taking a limited view of the subject to consider the battle which decided the fate of Narvaez as wholly fought at Cempoalla. It was begun in Mexico. With that singular power which he exercised over all who came near him, Cortés converted the very emissaries of Narvaez into his own friends and agents. The reports of Guevara and his companions, the intrigues of Father Olmedo, and the general's gold, were all busily at work to shake the loyalty of the soldiers, and the battle was half won before a blow had been struck. It was fought quite as much with gold as with steel. Cortés understood this so well that he made it his great object to seize the person of Narvaez. In such an event, he had full confidence that indifference to their own cause and partiality to himself would speedily bring the rest of the army under his banner. He was not deceived. Narvaez said truly enough, therefore, some years after this event, that "he had been beaten by his own troops, not by those of his rival; that his followers had been bribed to betray him."[23] This

[23] It was in a conversation with Oviedo himself, at Toledo, in 1525, in which Narvaez descanted with much bitterness, as was natural, on his rival's conduct. The gossip, which has never appeared in print, may have some interest for the Spanish reader. "Que el año de 1525, estando Cesar en la cibdad de Toledo, ví allí al dicho Narvaez, é publicamente decia, que Cortés era vn traidor: É que dándole S. M. licencia se lo haria conocer de su persona á la suya, é que era hombre

affords the only explanation of their brief and ineffectual resistance.

sin verdad, é otras muchas é feas palabras llamándole alevoso é tirano, é ingrato á su Señor, é á quien le havia embiado á la Nueva España, que era el Adelantado Diego Velasquez á su propia costa, é se le havia alzado con la tierra, é con la Gente é Hacienda, é otras muchas cosas que mal sonaban. Y en la manera de su prision la contaba mui al reves de lo que está dicho. Lo que yo noto de esto es, que con todo lo que oí á Narvaez, (como yo se lo dixe) no puedo hallarle desculpa para su descuido, porque ninguna necesidad tenia de andar con Cortés en pláticas, sino estar en vela mejor que la que hizo. É á esto decia él que le havian vendido aquellos de quien se fiaba, que Cortés le havia sobornado." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISCONTENT OF THE TROOPS. — INSURRECTION IN THE CAPITAL. — RETURN OF CORTÉS. — GENERAL SIGNS OF HOSTILITY. — MASSACRE BY ALVARADO. — RISING OF THE AZTECS.

1520.

THE tempest, that had raged so wildly during the night, passed away with the morning, which rose bright and unclouded on the field of battle. As the light advanced, it revealed more strikingly the disparity of the two forces so lately opposed to each other. Those of Narvaez could not conceal their chagrin; and murmurs of displeasure became audible, as they contrasted their own superior numbers and perfect appointments with the way-worn visages and rude attire of their handful of enemies! It was with some satisfaction, therefore, that the general beheld his dusky allies from Chinantla, two thousand in number, arrive upon the field. They were a fine, athletic set of men; and, as they advanced in a sort of promiscuous order, so to speak, with their gay banners of feather-work, and their long lances tipped with *itztli* and copper glistening in the morning sun, they had something of an air of military discipline. They came too late for the action, indeed, but Cortés was not sorry to exhibit to his new followers the extent of his resources in the country. As he had now no occasion for his Indian

allies, after a courteous reception and a liberal recompense he dismissed them to their homes.[1]

He then used his utmost endeavors to allay the discontent of the troops. He addressed them in his most soft and insinuating tones, and was by no means frugal of his promises.[2] He suited the action to the word. There were few of them but had lost their accoutrements or their baggage, or horses taken and appropriated by the victors. This last article was in great request among the latter, and many a soldier, weary with the long marches hitherto made on foot, had provided himself, as he imagined, with a much more comfortable as well as creditable conveyance for the rest of the campaign. The general now commanded everything to be restored.[3] "They were embarked in the same cause," he said, "and should share with one another equally." He went still further, and distributed among the soldiers of Narvaez a quantity of gold and other precious commodities gathered from the neighboring tribes or found in his rival's quarters.[4]

[1] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 6.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 123.

[2] Diaz, who had often listened to it, thus notices his eloquence: "Comenzó vn parlamento por tan lindo estilo, y plática, tãbiẽ dichas cierto otras palabras mas sabrosas, y llenas de ofertas, q̃ yo aquí no sabré escriuir." Ibid., cap. 122.

[3] Captain Diaz had secured for his share of the spoil of the Philistines, as he tells us, a very good horse with all his accoutrements, a brace of swords, three daggers, and a buckler,—a very beautiful outfit for the campaign. The general's orders were, naturally enough, not at all to his taste. Ibid., cap. 124.

[4] Narvaez alleges that Cortés plundered him of property to the value of 100,000 castellanos of gold! (Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de

These proceedings, however politic in reference to his new followers, gave great disgust to his old. "Our commander," they cried, "has forsaken his friends for his foes. We stood by him in his hour of distress, and are rewarded with blows and wounds, while the spoil goes to our enemies!" The indignant soldiery commissioned the priest Olmedo and Alonso de Avila to lay their complaints before Cortés. The ambassadors stated them without reserve, comparing their commander's conduct to the ungrateful proceeding of Alexander, who, when he gained a victory, usually gave away more to his enemies than to the troops who enabled him to beat them. Cortés was greatly perplexed. Victorious or defeated, his path seemed equally beset with difficulties.

He endeavored to soothe their irritation by pleading the necessity of the case. "Our new comrades," he said, "are formidable from their numbers, so much so that we are even now much more in their power than they are in ours. Our only security is to make them not merely confederates, but friends. On any cause of disgust, we shall have the whole battle to fight over again, and, if they are united, under a much greater disadvantage than before. I have considered your interests," he added, "as much as my own. All that I have is yours. But why should there be any ground for discontent, when the whole country, with its riches, is before us? And our augmented strength must henceforth secure the undisturbed control of it."

But Cortés did not rely wholly on argument for the

Narvaez, MS.) If so, the pillage of the leader may have supplied the means of liberality to the privates.

restoration of tranquillity. He knew this to be incompatible with inaction, and he made arrangements to divide his forces at once and to employ them on distant services. He selected a detachment of two hundred men, under Diego de Ordaz, whom he ordered to form the settlement before meditated on the Coatzacualco. A like number was sent with Velasquez de Leon, to secure the province of Panuco, some three degrees to the north, on the Mexican Gulf. Twenty in each detachment were drafted from his own veterans.

Two hundred men he despatched to Vera Cruz, with orders to have the rigging, iron, and everything portable on board of the fleet of Narvaez, brought on shore, and the vessels completely dismantled. He appointed a person named Cavallero superintendent of the marine, with instructions that if any ships hereafter should enter the port they should be dismantled in like manner, and their officers imprisoned on shore.[5]

But, while he was thus occupied with new schemes of discovery and conquest, he received such astounding intelligence from Mexico as compelled him to concentrate all his faculties and his forces on that one point. The city was in a state of insurrection. No sooner had the struggle with his rival been decided, than Cortés

5 Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 124.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 130.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—The visit of Narvaez left melancholy traces among the natives, that made it long remembered. A negro in his suite brought with him the smallpox. The disease spread rapidly in that quarter of the country, and great numbers of the Indian population soon fell victims to it. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 6.

despatched a courier with the tidings to the capital. In less than a fortnight the messenger returned with a letter from Alvarado, conveying the alarming information that the Mexicans were in arms and had vigorously assaulted the Spaniards in their own quarters. The enemy, he added, had burned the brigantines, by which Cortés had secured the means of retreat in case of the destruction of the bridges. They had attempted to force the defences, and had succeeded in partially undermining them, and they had overwhelmed the garrison with a tempest of missiles, which had killed several and wounded a great number. The letter concluded with beseeching the commander to hasten to the relief of his men, if he would save them or keep his hold on the capital.

These tidings were a heavy blow to the general,—the heavier, it seemed, coming as they did in the hour of triumph, when he had thought to have all his enemies at his feet. There was no room for hesitation. To lose his footing in the capital, the noblest city in the Western World, would be to lose the country itself, which looked up to it as its head.[6] He opened the matter fully to his soldiers, calling on all who would save their countrymen to follow him. All declared their readiness to go; showing an alacrity, says Diaz, which some would have been slow to manifest had they foreseen the future.

Cortés now made preparations for instant departure.

[6] "Se perdia la mejor, y mas Noble Ciudad de todo lo nuevamente descubierto del Mundo; y ella perdida, se perdia todo lo que estaba ganado, por ser la Cabeza de todo, y á quien todos obedecian." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 131.

natives. They were sent back to the troops; the stragglers were collected one by one; refreshments were administered; and the army, restored in strength and spirits, entered the republican capital.

Here they gathered little additional news respecting the events in Mexico, which a popular rumor attributed to the secret encouragement and machinations of Montezuma. Cortés was commodiously lodged in the quarters of Maxixca, one of the four chiefs of the republic. They readily furnished him with two thousand troops. There was no want of heartiness, when the war was with their ancient enemy the Aztec.[7]

The Spanish commander, on reviewing his forces after the junction with his two captains, found that they amounted to about a thousand foot, and one hundred horse, besides the Tlascalan levies.[8] In the infantry were nearly a hundred arquebusiers, with as many crossbowmen; and the part of the army brought over by Narvaez was admirably equipped. It was inferior, however, to his own veterans in what is better than any outward appointments,—military training, and familiarity with the peculiar service in which they were engaged.

7 Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 131.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 14.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 124, 125.—Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 5.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

8 Gomara, Crónica, cap. 103.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10 cap. 7.—Bernal Diaz raises the amount to 1300 foot and 96 horse. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 125.) Cortés diminishes it to less than half that number. (Rel. Seg., ubi supra.) The estimate cited in the text from the two preceding authorities corresponds nearly enough with that already given from official documents of the forces of Cortés and Narvaez before the junction.

Leaving these friendly quarters, the Spaniards took a more northerly route, as more direct than that by which they had before penetrated into the Valley. It was the road to Tezcuco. It still compelled them to climb the same bold range of the Cordilleras, which attains its greatest elevation in the two mighty *volcans* at whose base they had before travelled. The sides of the sierra were clothed with dark forests of pine, cypress, and cedar,[9] through which glimpses now and then opened into fathomless dells and valleys, whose depths, far down in the sultry climate of the tropics, were lost in a glowing wilderness of vegetation. From the crest of the mountain range the eye travelled over the broad expanse of country, which they had lately crossed, far away to the green plains of Cholula. Towards the west, they looked down on the Mexican Valley, from a point of view wholly different from that which they had before occupied, but still offering the same beautiful spectacle, with its lakes trembling in the light, its gay cities and villas floating on their bosom, its burnished *teocallis* touched with fire, its cultivated slopes and dark hills of porphyry stretching away in dim perspective to the verge of the horizon. At their feet lay the city of Tezcuco, which, modestly retiring behind her deep groves of cypress, formed a contrast to her more ambitious rival on the other side of the

[9] "Las sierras altas de Tetzcuco á que le mostrasen desde la mas alta cumbre de aquellas montañas y sierras de Tetzcuco, que son las sierras de Tlallocan altísimas y humbrosas, en las cuales he estado y visto, y puedo decir que son bastante para descubrir el un emisferio y otro, porque son los mayores puertos y mas altos de esta Nueva España, de árboles y montes de grandísima altura, de cedras, cipreses y pinares." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

lake, who seemed to glory in the unveiled splendors of her charms, as Mistress of the Valley.

As they descended into the populous plains, their reception by the natives was very different from that which they had experienced on the preceding visit. There were no groups of curious peasantry to be seen gazing at them as they passed, and offering their simple hospitality. The supplies they asked were not refused, but granted with an ungracious air, that showed the blessing of the giver did not accompany them. This air of reserve became still more marked as the army entered the suburbs of the ancient capital of the Acolhuans. No one came forth to greet them, and the population seemed to have dwindled away,—so many of them were withdrawn to the neighboring scene of hostilities at Mexico.[10] Their cold reception was a sensible mortification to the veterans of Cortés, who, judging from the past, had boasted to their new comrades of the sensation their presence would excite among the natives. The cacique of the place, who, as it may be remembered, had been created through the influence of Cortés, was himself absent. The general drew an ill omen from all these circumstances, which even raised an uncomfortable apprehension in his mind respecting the fate of the garrison in Mexico.[11]

[10] The historian partly explains the reason: "En la misma Ciudad de Tezcuco habia algunos apasionados de los deudos y amigos de los que matáron Pedro de Alvarado y sus compañeros en México." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

[11] "En todo el camino nunca me salió á recibir ninguna Persona de el dicho Muteczuma, como ántes lo solian facer; y toda la Tierra estaba alborotada, y casi despoblada: de que concebí mala sospecha, creyendo que los Españoles que en la dicha Ciudad habian quedado, eran muertos." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 132.

But his doubts were soon dispelled by the arrival of a messenger in a canoe from that city, whence he had escaped through the remissness of the enemy, or, perhaps, with their connivance. He brought despatches from Alvarado, informing his commander that the Mexicans had for the last fortnight desisted from active hostilities and converted their operations into a blockade. The garrison had suffered greatly, but Alvarado expressed his conviction that the siege would be raised, and tranquillity restored, on the approach of his countrymen. Montezuma sent a messenger, also, to the same effect. At the same time, he exculpated himself from any part in the late hostilities, which he said had been conducted not only without his privity, but contrary to his inclination and efforts.

The Spanish general, having halted long enough to refresh his wearied troops, took up his march along the southern margin of the lake, which led him over the same causeway by which he had before entered the capital. It was the day consecrated to St. John the Baptist, the 24th of June, 1520. But how different was the scene from that presented on his former entrance![12] No crowds now lined the roads, no boats swarmed on the lake, filled with admiring spectators. A single pirogue might now and then be seen in the distance, like a spy stealthily watching their movements, and darting away the moment it had attracted notice. A deathlike stillness brooded over the scene,

[12] "Y como asomó á la vista de la Ciudad de México, parecióle que estaba toda yerma, y que no parecia persona por todos los caminos, ni casas, ni plazas, ni nadie le salió á recibir, ni de los suyos, ni de los enemigos; y fué esto señal de indignacion y enemistad por lo que habia pasado." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 19.

—a stillness that spoke louder to the heart than the acclamations of multitudes.

Cortés rode on moodily at the head of his battalions, finding abundant food for meditation, doubtless, in this change of circumstances. As if to dispel these gloomy reflections, he ordered his trumpets to sound, and their clear, shrill notes, borne across the waters, told the inhabitants of the beleaguered fortress that their friends were at hand. They were answered by a joyous peal of artillery, which seemed to give a momentary exhilaration to the troops, as they quickened their pace, traversed the great drawbridges, and once more found themselves within the walls of the imperial city.

The appearance of things here was not such as to allay their apprehensions. In some places they beheld the smaller bridges removed, intimating too plainly, now that their brigantines were destroyed, how easy it would be to cut off their retreat.[13] The town seemed even more deserted than Tezcuco. Its once busy and crowded population had mysteriously vanished. And, as the Spaniards defiled through the empty streets, the tramp of their horses' feet upon the pavement was answered by dull and melancholy echoes that fell heavily on their hearts. With saddened feelings they reached the great gates of the palace of Axayacatl. The gates were thrown open, and Cortés and his veterans, rushing in, were cordially embraced by their companions in arms, while both parties soon forgot the present in the interesting recapitulation of the past.[14]

[13] "Pontes ligneos qui tractim lapideos intersecant, sublatos, ac vias aggeribus munitas reperit." P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 5.

[14] Probanza á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde, MS.—Rel. Seg. de

The first inquiries of the general were respecting the origin of the tumult. The accounts were various. Some imputed it to the desire of the Mexicans to release their sovereign from confinement; others to the design of cutting off the garrison while crippled by the absence of Cortés and their countrymen. All agreed, however, in tracing the immediate cause to the violence of Alvarado. It was common for the Aztecs to celebrate an annual festival in May, in honor of their patron war-god. It was called the "incensing of Huitzilopochtli," and was commemorated by sacrifice, religious songs, and dances, in which most of the nobles engaged, for it was one of the great festivals which displayed the pomp of the Aztec ritual. As it was held in the court of the *teocalli*, in the immediate neighborhood of the Spanish quarters, and as a part of the temple itself was reserved for a Christian chapel, the caciques asked permission of Alvarado to perform their rites there. They requested also, it is said, to be allowed the presence of Montezuma. This latter petition Alvarado declined, in obedience to the injunctions of Cortés; but acquiesced in the former, on condition that the Aztecs should celebrate no human sacrifices and should come without weapons.

They assembled accordingly on the day appointed,

Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 133.—"Esto causó gran admiracion en todos los que venian, pero no dejáron de marchar, hasta entrar donde estaban los Españoles acorralados. Venian todos muy casados y muy fatigados y con mucho deseo de llegar á donde estaban sus hermanos; los de dentro cuando los viéron, recibiéron singular consolacion y esfuerzo y recibiéronlos con la artillería que tenian, saludándolos, y dándolos el parabien de su venida." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.

to the number of six hundred, at the smallest computation.[15] They were dressed in their most magnificent gala costumes, with their graceful mantles of feather-work sprinkled with precious stones, and their necks, arms, and legs ornamented with collars and bracelets of gold. They had that love of gaudy splendor which belongs to semi-civilized nations, and on these occasions displayed all the pomp and profusion of their barbaric wardrobes.

Alvarado and his soldiers attended as spectators, some of them taking their station at the gates as if by chance, and others mingling in the crowd. They were all armed,—a circumstance which, as it was usual, excited no attention. The Aztecs were soon engrossed by the exciting movement of the dance, accompanied by their religious chant and wild, discordant minstrelsy. While thus occupied, Alvarado and his men, at a concerted signal, rushed with drawn swords on their victims. Unprotected by armor or weapons of any kind, they were hewn down without resistance by their assailants, who in their bloody work, says a contemporary, showed no touch of pity or compunction.[16] Some fled to the gates, but were caught on the long

[15] "É así los Indios, todos Señores, mas de 600 desnudos é con muchas joyas de oro é hermosos penachos, é muchas piedras preciosas, é como mas aderezados é gentiles hombres se pudiéron é supiéron aderezar, é sin arma alguna defensiva ni ofensiva bailaban é cantaban é hacian su areito é fiesta segun su costumbre." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 54.) Some writers carry the number as high as eight hundred or even one thousand. Las Casas, with a more modest exaggeration than usual, swells it only to two thousand. Brevíssima Relatione, p. 48.

[16] "Sin duelo ni piedad Christiana los acuchilló, i mató." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 104.

pikes of the soldiers. Others, who attempted to scale the *coatepantli*, or Wall of Serpents, as it was called, which surrounded the area, shared the like fate, or were cut to pieces, or shot by the ruthless soldiery. The pavement, says a writer of the age, ran with streams of blood, like water in a heavy shower.[17] Not an Aztec, of all that gay company, was left alive! It was repeating the dreadful scene of Cholula, with the disgraceful addition that the Spaniards, not content with slaughtering their victims, rifled them of the precious ornaments on their persons! On this sad day fell the flower of the Aztec nobility. Not a family of note but had mourning and desolation brought within its walls.[18] And many a doleful ballad, rehearsing the

[17] "Fué tan grande el derramamiento de Sangre, que corrian arroyos de ella por el Patio, como agua cuando mucho llueve." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 20.

[18] [In the process instituted against Alvarado this massacre forms one of the most important charges. He is there accused of having killed four hundred of the principal nobles and a great number of the common people, of whom more than three thousand, it is stated, were assembled to celebrate the festival in honor of their war-god. "Ynbio al patyo donde todos baylaban y syn cabsa ni razon alguna dieron sobrellos y mataron todos los mas de los señores que estavan presos con el dicho Motenzuma y mataron cuatro cientos señores e prencipales que con el estavan e mataron mucho numero de yndios que estavan baylando en mas cantydad de tres mill personas." (Procesos de Residencia, instruidos contra Pedro de Alvarado y Nuño de Guzman, p. 53.) The public are under great obligations to the licentiate Don Ignacio Rayon for bringing into light this important document, which for more than three centuries had lain hid in the General Archives of Mexico. We have hardly less reason to thank him for placing the manuscript in the hands of so competent a scholar as Don José Fernando Ramirez, to enrich it with the stores of his critical erudition. The publication of the process did not take place till some years after that of my own history of the Conquest of Mexico. But, as

tragic incidents of the story, and adapted to the plaintive national airs, continued to be chanted by the natives long after the subjugation of the country.[19]

Various explanations have been given of this atrocious deed. But few historians have been content to admit that of Alvarado himself. According to this, intelligence had been obtained through his spies—some of them Mexicans—of an intended rising of the Indians. The celebration of this festival was fixed on as the period for its execution, when the caciques would be met together and would easily rouse the people to support them. Alvarado, advised of all this, had forbidden them to wear arms at their meeting. While affecting to comply, they had secreted their weapons in the neighboring arsenals, whence they could readily withdraw them. But his own blow, by anticipating theirs, defeated the design, and, as he confidently hoped, would deter the Aztecs from a similar attempt in future.[20]

it contains a minute specification of the various charges against Alvarado, and his own defence, it furnishes me with the means of correcting any errors into which I have fallen in reference to that commander, while it corroborates, I may add, the general tenor of the statements I have derived from contemporary chroniclers.]

[19] "Y de aquí á que se acabe el mundo, ó ellos del todo se acaben, no dexarán de lamentar, y cantar en sus areytos, y bayles, como en romances, que acá dezimos, aquella calamidad, y perdida de la sucession de toda su nobleza, de que se preciauan de tantos años atras." Las Casas, Brevíssima Relatione, p. 49.

[20] See Alvarado's reply to queries of Cortés, as reported by Diaz (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 125), with some additional particulars in Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 66), Solís (Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 12), and Herrera (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8), who all seem content to endorse Alvarado's version of the matter. I find no other authority, of any weight, in the same charitable vein.

Such is the account of the matter given by Alvarado. But, if true, why did he not verify his assertion by exposing the arms thus secreted? Why did he not vindicate his conduct in the eyes of the Mexicans generally, by publicly avowing the treason of the nobles, as was done by Cortés at Cholula? The whole looks much like an apology devised after the commission of the deed, to cover up its atrocity.

Some contemporaries assign a very different motive for the massacre, which, according to them, originated in the cupidity of the Conquerors, as shown by their plundering the bodies of their victims.[21] Bernal Diaz, who, though not present, had conversed familiarly with those who were, vindicates them from the charge of this unworthy motive. According to him, Alvarado struck the blow in order to intimidate the Aztecs from any insurrectionary movement.[22] But whether he had reason to apprehend such, or even affected to do so before the massacre, the old chronicler does not inform us.

[21] Oviedo mentions a conversation which he had some years after this tragedy with a noble Spaniard, Don Thoan Cano, who came over in the train of Narvaez and was present at all the subsequent operations of the army. He married a daughter of Montezuma, and settled in Mexico after the Conquest. Oviedo describes him as a man of sense and integrity. In answer to the historian's queries respecting the cause of the rising, he said that Alvarado had wantonly perpetrated the massacre from pure avarice; and the Aztecs, enraged at such unprovoked and unmerited cruelty, rose, as they well might, to avenge it. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 54.) See the original dialogue in Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.

[22] "Verdaderamente dió en ellos por metelles temor." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 125.

On reflection, it seems scarcely possible that so foul a deed, and one involving so much hazard to the Spaniards themselves, should have been perpetrated from the mere desire of getting possession of the baubles worn on the persons of the natives. It is more likely this was an after-thought, suggested to the rapacious soldiery by the display of the spoil before them. It is not improbable that Alvarado may have gathered rumors of a conspiracy among the nobles,—rumors, perhaps, derived through the Tlascalans, their inveterate foes, and for that reason very little deserving of credit.[23] He proposed to defeat it by imitating the example of his commander at Cholula. But he omitted to imitate his leader in taking precautions against the subsequent rising of the populace. And he grievously

[23] Such, indeed, is the statement of Ixtlilxochitl, derived, as he says, from the native Tezcucan annalists. According to them, the Tlascalans, urged by their hatred of the Aztecs and their thirst for plunder, persuaded Alvarado, nothing loth, that the nobles meditated a rising on the occasion of these festivities. The testimony is important, and I give it in the author's words: "Fué que ciertos Tlascaltecas (segun las Historias de Tescuco que son las que Io sigo y la carta que otras veces he referido) por embidia lo uno acordándose que en semejante fiesta los Mexicanos solian sacrificar gran suma de cautivos de los de la Nacion Tlascalteca, y lo otro que era la mejor ocasion que ellos podian tener para poder hinchir las manos de despojos y hartar su codicia, y vengarse de sus Enemigos (porque hasta entonces no habian tenido lugar, ni Cortés se les diera, ni admitiera sus dichos, porque siempre hacia las cosas con mucho acuerdo) fuéron con esta invencion al capitan Pedro de Albarado, que estaba en lugar de Cortés, el qual no fué menester mucho para darles crédito porque tan buenos filos, y pensamientos tenia como ellos, y mas viendo que allí en aquella fiesta habian acudido todos los Señores y Cabezas del Imperio y que muertos no tenian mucho trabajo en sojuzgarles." Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

miscalculated when he confounded the bold and warlike Aztec with the effeminate Cholulan.[24]

No sooner was the butchery accomplished, than the tidings spread like wildfire through the capital. Men could scarcely credit their senses. All they had hitherto suffered, the desecration of their temples, the imprisonment of their sovereign, the insults heaped on his person, all were forgotten in this one act.[25] Every

[24] [Alvarado intimates, in the defence of his conduct which forms part of the process, one source of the rumors respecting the rising of the Aztecs, by saying that the existence of such a scheme was matter of public notoriety among the Tlascalans. He adds that he obtained more precise intelligence from two or three Indians, one a Tezcucan, another a slave whom he had rescued from the sacrifice to which he had been doomed by the Aztecs; that these latter, under cover of the festivities, had planned an insurrection against the Spaniards, in which he and his countrymen were all to be exterminated. At the same time they determined to tear down the image of the Virgin which had been raised in the temple, and in its place to substitute that of their war-god, Huitzilopochtli. Montezuma was accused of being privy to this conspiracy. Thus instructed, Alvarado, as he asserts, got his men in readiness to resist the enemy, who, after a short encounter, was repulsed with slaughter, while one Spaniard was slain, and he himself, with several others, severely wounded (Proceso, pp. 66, 67). But although a long array of witnesses, most of them probably his ancient friends and comrades, are introduced to endorse his statement, one who reflects on the submissive spirit hitherto shown, not only by Montezuma, but his subjects, in their dealings with the Spaniards, and contrasts it with the fierce and unscrupulous temper displayed by Alvarado, will have little doubt on whose head the guilt of the massacre must rest; and as little seems to have been felt by most of the writers of the time who have spoken of the affair.]

[25] Martyr well recapitulates these grievances, showing that they seemed such in the eyes of the Spaniards themselves,—of those, at least, whose judgment was not warped by a share in the transactions. "Emori statuerunt malle, quam diutius ferre tales hospites qui regem suum sub tutoris vitæ specie detineant, civitatem occupent, antiquos

feeling of long-smothered hostility and rancor now burst forth in the cry for vengeance. Every former sentiment of superstitious dread was merged in that of inextinguishable hatred. It required no effort of the priests—though this was not wanting—to fan these passions into a blaze. The city rose in arms to a man; and on the following dawn, almost before the Spaniards could secure themselves in their defences, they were assaulted with desperate fury. Some of the assailants attempted to scale the walls; others succeeded in partially undermining and setting fire to the works. Whether they would have succeeded in carrying the place by storm is doubtful. But, at the prayers of the garrison, Montezuma himself interfered, and, mounting the battlements, addressed the populace, whose fury he endeavored to mitigate by urging considerations for his own safety. They respected their monarch so far as to desist from further attempts to storm the fortress, but changed their operations into a regular blockade. They threw up works around the palace to prevent the egress of the Spaniards. They suspended the *tianguez*, or market, to preclude the possibility of their enemy's obtaining supplies; and they then quietly sat down, with feelings of sullen desperation, waiting for the hour when famine should throw their victims into their hands.

The condition of the besieged, meanwhile, was sufficiently distressing. Their magazines of provisions,

hostes Tascaltecanos et alios præterea in contumeliam ante illorum oculos ipsorum impensa conseruent; . . . . . qui demum simulachra deorum confregerint, et ritus veteres ac ceremonias antiquas illis abstulerint." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 5.

it is true, were not exhausted; but they suffered greatly from want of water, which, within the enclosure, was exceedingly brackish, for the soil was saturated with the salt of the surrounding element. In this extremity, they discovered, it is said, a spring of fresh water in the area. Such springs were known in some other parts of the city; but, discovered first under these circumstances, it was accounted as nothing less than a miracle. Still they suffered much from their past encounters. Seven Spaniards, and many Tlascalans, had fallen, and there was scarcely one of either nation who had not received several wounds. In this situation, far from their own countrymen, without expectation of succor from abroad, they seemed to have no alternative before them but a lingering death by famine, or one more dreadful on the altar of sacrifice. From this gloomy state they were relieved by the coming of their comrades.[26]

Cortés calmly listened to the explanation made by Alvarado. But, before it was ended, the conviction must have forced itself on his mind that he had made a wrong selection for this important post. Yet the mistake was natural. Alvarado was a cavalier of high family, gallant and chivalrous, and his warm personal friend. He had talents for action, was possessed of firmness and intrepidity, while his frank and dazzling manners made the *Tonatiuh* an especial favorite with the Mexicans. But underneath this showy exterior the future conqueror of Guatemala concealed a heart rash, rapacious, and cruel. He was altogether desti-

[26] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 47.—Gomara, Crónica cap. 105.

tute of that moderation which, in the delicate position he occupied, was a quality of more worth than all the rest.

When Alvarado had concluded his answers to the several interrogatories of Cortés, the brow of the latter darkened, as he said to his lieutenant, "You have done badly. You have been false to your trust. Your conduct has been that of a madman!" And, turning abruptly on his heel, he left him in undisguised displeasure.

Yet this was not a time to break with one so popular, and, in many respects, so important to him, as this captain, much less to inflict on him the punishment he merited. The Spaniards were like mariners laboring in a heavy tempest, whose bark nothing but the dexterity of the pilot and the hearty co-operation of the crew can save from foundering. Dissensions at such a moment must be fatal. Cortés, it is true, felt strong in his present resources. He now found himself at the head of a force which could scarcely amount to less than twelve hundred and fifty Spaniards, and eight thousand native warriors, principally Tlascalans.[97] But, though relying on this to overawe resistance, the very augmentation of numbers increased the difficulty of subsistence. Discontented with himself, disgusted with his officer, and embarrassed by the disastrous consequences in which Alvarado's intemperance had in-

[97] He left in garrison, on his departure from Mexico, 140 Spaniards and about 6500 Tlascalans, including a few Cempoallan warriors. Supposing five hundred of these—a liberal allowance—to have perished in battle and otherwise, it would still leave a number which, with the reinforcement now brought, would raise the amount to that stated in the text.

volved him, he became irritable, and indulged in a petulance by no means common; for, though a man of lively passions by nature, he held them habitually under control.[28]

On the day that Cortés arrived, Montezuma had left his own quarters to welcome him. But the Spanish commander, distrusting, as it would seem, however unreasonably, his good faith, received him so coldly that the Indian monarch withdrew, displeased and dejected, to his apartment. As the Mexican populace made no show of submission, and brought no supplies to the army, the general's ill humor with the emperor continued. When, therefore, Montezuma sent some of the nobles to ask an interview with Cortés, the latter, turning to his own officers, haughtily exclaimed, "What have I to do with this dog of a king who suffers us to starve before his eyes?"

His captains, among whom were Olid, De Avila, and Velasquez de Leon, endeavored to mitigate his anger, reminding him, in respectful terms, that had it not been for the emperor the garrison might even now have been overwhelmed by the enemy. This remonstrance only chafed him the more. "Did not the dog," he asked, repeating the opprobrious epithet, "betray us in his communications with Narvaez? And does he not now suffer his markets to be closed, and leave us to die of famine?" Then, turning fiercely to the Mexicans, he said, "Go tell your master and his people to open the

[28] "Seeing how all went contrary to his expectations and that we still received no supplies, he grew extremely sad, and showed himself in his bearing towards the Spaniards fretful and haughty." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

markets, or we will do it for them, at their cost!" The chiefs, who had gathered the import of his previous taunt on their sovereign, from his tone and gesture, or perhaps from some comprehension of his language, left his presence swelling with resentment, and, in communicating his message, took care it should lose none of its effect.[29]

Shortly after, Cortés, at the suggestion, it is said, of Montezuma, released his brother Cuitlahua, lord of Iztapalapan, who, it will be remembered, had been seized on suspicion of co-operating with the chief of Tezcuco in his meditated revolt. It was thought he might be of service in allaying the present tumult and bringing the populace to a better state of feeling. But he returned no more to the fortress.[30] He was a bold, ambitious prince, and the injuries he had received from the Spaniards rankled deep in his bosom. He was presumptive heir to the crown, which, by the Aztec laws of succession, descended much more frequently in a collateral than in a direct line. The people welcomed him as the representative of their sovereign, and chose him to supply the place of Montezuma during his captivity. Cuitlahua willingly accepted the post of honor and of danger. He was an experienced warrior, and exerted himself to reorganize the disorderly levies and to arrange a more efficient plan of operations. The effect was soon visible.

[29] The scene is reported by Diaz, who was present. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.) See, also, the Chronicle of Gomara, the chaplain of Cortés. (Cap. 106.) It is further confirmed by Don Thoan Cano, an eye-witness, in his conversation with Oviedo. See Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.

[30] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8.

Cortés meanwhile had so little doubt of his ability to overawe the insurgents, that he wrote to that effect to the garrison of Villa Rica by the same despatches in which he informed them of his safe arrival in the capital. But scarcely had his messenger been gone half an hour, when he returned breathless with terror and covered with wounds. "The city," he said, "was all in arms! The draw-bridges were raised, and the enemy would soon be upon them!" He spoke truth. It was not long before a hoarse, sullen sound became audible, like that of the roaring of distant waters. It grew louder and louder; till, from the parapet surrounding the enclosure, the great avenues which led to it might be seen dark with the masses of warriors, who came rolling on in a confused tide towards the fortress. At the same time, the terraces and *azoteas* or flat roofs, in the neighborhood, were thronged with combatants brandishing their missiles, who seemed to have risen up as if by magic![31] It was a spectacle to appall the stoutest. But the dark storm to which it was the prelude, and which gathered deeper and deeper round the Spaniards during the remainder of their residence in the capital, must form the subject of a separate Book.

[31] "El qual Mensajero bolvió dende á media hora todo descalabrado, y herido, dando voces, que todos los Indios de la Ciudad venian de Guerra y que tenian todas las Puentes alzadas; é junto tras él da sobre nosotros tanta multitud de Gente por todas partes que ni las calles ni Azoteas se parecian con Gente; la qual venia con los mayores alaridos, y grita mas espantable, que en el Mundo se puede pensar." Rel. Seg. de Cortes, ap. Lorenzana, p. 134.—Oviedo. Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés was born in 1478. He belonged to an ancient family of the Asturias. Every family, indeed,

claims to be ancient in this last retreat of the intrepid Goths. He was early introduced at court, and was appointed page to Prince Juan, the only son of Ferdinand and Isabella, on whom their hopes, and those of the nation, deservedly rested. Oviedo accompanied the camp in the latter campaigns of the Moorish war, and was present at the memorable siege of Granada. On the untimely death of his royal master, in 1496, he passed over to Italy and entered the service of King Frederick of Naples. At the death of that prince he returned to his own country, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century we find him again established in Castile, where he occupied the place of keeper of the crown jewels. In 1513 he was named by Ferdinand the Catholic *veedor*, or inspector, of the gold founderies in the American colonies. Oviedo, accordingly, transported himself to the New World, where he soon took a commission under Pedrarias, governor of Darien, and shared in the disastrous fortunes of that colony. He obtained some valuable privileges from the Crown, built a fortress on Tierra Firme and entered into traffic with the natives. In this we may presume he was prosperous, since we find him at length established with a wife and family at Hispaniola, or Fernandina, as it was then called. Although he continued to make his principal residence in the New World, he made occasional visits to Spain, and in 1526 published at Madrid his *Sumario*. It is dedicated to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and contains an account of the West Indies, their geography, climate, the races who inhabited them, together with their animals and vegetable productions. The subject was of great interest to the inquisitive minds of Europe, and one of which they had previously gleaned but scanty information. In 1535, in a subsequent visit to Spain, Oviedo gave to the world the first volume of his great work, which he had been many years in compiling,—the *Historia de las Indias occidentales*. In the same year he was appointed by Charles the Fifth alcayde of the fortress of Hispaniola. He continued in the island the ten following years, actively engaged in the prosecution of his historical researches, and then returned for the last time to his native land. The veteran scholar was well received at court, and obtained the honorable appointment of Chronicler of the Indies. He occupied this post until the period of his death, which took place at Valladolid in 1557, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, at the very time when he was employed in preparing the residue of his history for the press.

Considering the intimate footing on which Oviedo lived with the eminent persons of his time, it is singular that so little is preserved of

his personal history and his character. Nic. Antonio speaks of him as a "man of large experience, courteous in his manners, and of great probity." His long and active life is a sufficient voucher for his experience, and one will hardly doubt his good breeding when we know the high society in which he moved. He left a large mass of manuscripts, embracing a vast range both of civil and natural history. By far the most important is his *Historia general de las Indias*. It is divided into three parts, containing fifty books. The first part, consisting of nineteen books, is the one already noticed as having been published during his lifetime. It gives in a more extended form the details of geographical and natural history embodied in his *Sumario*, with a narrative, moreover, of the discoveries and conquests of the Islands. A translation of this portion of the work was made by the learned Ramusio, with whom Oviedo was in correspondence, and is published in the third volume of his inestimable collection. The two remaining parts relate to the conquests of Mexico, of Peru, and other countries of South America. It is that portion of the work consulted for these pages. The manuscript was deposited, at his death, in the *Casa de la Contratacion*, at Seville. It afterwards came into the possession of the Dominican monastery of Monserrat. In process of time, mutilated copies found their way into several private collections; when, in 1775, Don Francisco Cerda y Rico, an officer in the Indian department, ascertained the place in which the original was preserved, and, prompted by his literary zeal, obtained an order from the government for its publication. Under his supervision the work was put in order for the press, and Oviedo's biographer, Alvarez y Baena, assures us that a complete edition of it, prepared with the greatest care, would soon be given to the world. (Hijos de Madrid (Madrid, 1790), tom. ii. pp. 354–361.) It still remains in manuscript.

No country has been more fruitful in the field of historical composition than Spain. Her ballads are chronicles done into verse. The chronicles themselves date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Every city, every small town, every great family, and many a petty one, has its chronicler. These were often mere monkish chroniclers, who in the seclusion of the convent found leisure for literary occupation. Or, not unfrequently, they were men who had taken part in the affairs they described, more expert with the sword than with the pen. The compositions of this latter class have a general character of that indifference to fine writing which shows a mind intent on the facts with which it is occupied, much more than on forms of expression.

The monkish chroniclers, on the other hand, often make a pedantic display of obsolete erudition, which contrasts rather whimsically with the homely texture of the narrative. The chronicles of both the one and the other class of writers may frequently claim the merit of picturesque and animated detail, showing that the subject was one of living interest, and that the writer's heart was in his subject.

Many of the characteristic blemishes of which I have been speaking may be charged on Oviedo. His style is cast in no classic mould. His thoughts find themselves a vent in tedious, interminable sentences, that may fill the reader with despair; and the thread of the narrative is broken by impertinent episodes that lead to nothing. His scholarship was said to be somewhat scanty. One will hardly be led to doubt it, from the tawdry display of Latin quotations with which he garnishes his pages, like a poor gallant who would make the most of his little store of finery. He affected to take the elder Pliny as his model, as appears from the preface to his *Sumario*. But his own work fell far short of the model of erudition and eloquence which that great writer of natural history has bequeathed to us.

Yet, with his obvious defects, Oviedo showed an enlightened curiosity, and a shrewd spirit of observation, which place him far above the ordinary range of chroniclers. He may even be said to display a philosophic tone in his reflections, though his philosophy must be regarded as cold and unscrupulous wherever the rights of the aborigines are in question. He was indefatigable in amassing materials for his narratives, and for this purpose maintained a correspondence with the most eminent men of his time who had taken part in the transactions which he commemorates. He even condescended to collect information from more humble sources, from popular tradition and the reports of the common soldiers. Hence his work often presents a medley of inconsistent and contradictory details, which perplex the judgment, making it exceedingly difficult, at this distance of time, to disentangle the truth. It was perhaps for this reason that Las Casas complimented the author by declaring that "his works were a wholesale fabrication, as full of lies as of pages!" Yet another explanation of this severe judgment may be found in the different characters of the two men. Oviedo shared in the worldly feelings common to the Spanish Conquerors, and, while he was ever ready to magnify the exploits of his countrymen, held lightly the claims and the sufferings of the unfortunate aborigines. He was incapable of appreciating the generous philanthropy of Las Casas, or of rising to his lofty views, which he

doubtless derided as those of a benevolent, it might be, but visionary fanatic. Las Casas, on the other hand, whose voice had been constantly uplifted against the abuses of the Conquerors, was filled with abhorrence at the sentiments avowed by Oviedo, and it was natural that his aversion to the principles should be extended to the person who professed them. Probably no two men could have been found less competent to form a right estimate of each other.

Oviedo showed the same activity in gathering materials for natural history as he had done for the illustration of civil. He collected the different plants of the Islands in his garden, and domesticated many of the animals, or kept them in confinement under his eye, where he could study their peculiar habits. By this course, if he did not himself rival Pliny and Hernandez in science, he was, at least, enabled to furnish the man of science with facts of the highest interest and importance.

Besides these historical writings, Oviedo left a work in six volumes, called by the whimsical title of *Quincuagenas*. It consists of imaginary dialogues between the most eminent Spaniards of the time, in respect to their personal history, their families, and genealogy. It is a work of inestimable value to the historian of the times of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of Charles the Fifth. But it has attracted little attention in Spain, where it still remains in manuscript. A complete copy of Oviedo's History of the Indies is in the archives of the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, and it is understood that this body has now an edition prepared for the press. Such parts as are literally transcribed from preceding narratives, like the Letters of Cortés, which Oviedo transferred without scruple entire and unmutilated into his own pages, though enlivened, it is true, by occasional criticism of his own, might as well be omitted. But the remainder of the great work affords a mass of multifarious information which would make an important contribution to the colonial history of Spain.

An authority of frequent reference in these pages is Diego Muñoz Camargo. He was a noble Tlascalan *mestee*, and lived in the latter half of the sixteenth century. He was educated in the Christian faith, and early instructed in Castilian, in which tongue he composed his *Historia de Tlascala*. In this work he introduces the reader to the different members of the great Nahuatlac family who came successively up the Mexican plateau. Born and bred among the aborigines of the country, when the practices of the pagan age had not wholly become obsolete, Camargo was in a position perfectly to comprehend

the condition of the ancient inhabitants; and his work supplies much curious and authentic information respecting the social and religious institutions of the land at the time of the Conquest. His patriotism warms as he recounts the old hostilities of his countrymen with the Aztecs; and it is singular to observe how the detestation of the rival nations survived their common subjection under the Castilian yoke.

Camargo embraces in his narrative an account of this great event, and of the subsequent settlement of the country. As one of the Indian family, we might expect to see his chronicle reflect the prejudices, or, at least, partialities, of the Indian. But the Christian convert yielded up his sympathies as freely to the Conquerors as to his own countrymen. The desire to magnify the exploits of the latter, and at the same time to do full justice to the prowess of the white men, produces occasionally a most whimsical contrast in his pages, giving the story a strong air of inconsistency. In point of literary execution the work has little merit; as great, however, as could be expected from a native Indian, indebted for his knowledge of the tongue to such imperfect instruction as he could obtain from the missionaries. Yet in style of composition it may compare not unfavorably with the writings of some of the missionaries themselves.

The original manuscript was long preserved in the convent of *San Felipe Neri* in Mexico, where Torquemada, as appears from occasional references, had access to it. It has escaped the attention of other historians, but was embraced by Muñoz in his magnificent collection, and deposited in the archives of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; from which source the copy in my possession was obtained. It bears the title of *Pedazo de Historia verdadera*, and is without the author's name, and without division into books or chapters.

BOOK FIFTH.

EXPULSION FROM MEXICO.

BOOK V.

EXPULSION FROM MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

DESPERATE ASSAULT ON THE QUARTERS.—FURY OF THE MEXICANS.—SALLY OF THE SPANIARDS.—MONTEZUMA ADDRESSES THE PEOPLE.—DANGEROUSLY WOUNDED.

1520.

THE palace of Axayacatl, in which the Spaniards were quartered, was, as the reader may remember, a vast, irregular pile of stone buildings, having but one floor, except in the centre, where another story was added, consisting of a suite of apartments which rose like turrets on the main building of the edifice. A vast area stretched around, encompassed by a stone wall of no great height. This was supported by towers or bulwarks at certain intervals, which gave it some degree of strength, not, indeed, as compared with European fortifications, but sufficient to resist the rude battering enginery of the Indians. The parapet had been pierced here and there with embrasures for the artillery, which consisted of thirteen guns; and smaller apertures were made in other parts for the convenience

of the arquebusiers. The Spanish forces found accommodations within the great building; but the numerous body of Tlascalan auxiliaries could have had no other shelter than what was afforded by barracks or sheds hastily constructed for the purpose in the spacious court-yard. Most of them, probably, bivouacked under the open sky, in a climate milder than that to which they were accustomed among the rude hills of their native land. Thus crowded into a small and compact compass, the whole army could be assembled at a moment's notice; and, as the Spanish commander was careful to enforce the strictest discipline and vigilance, it was scarcely possible that he could be taken by surprise. No sooner, therefore, did the trumpet call to arms, as the approach of the enemy was announced, than every soldier was at his post, the cavalry mounted, the artillery-men at their guns, and the archers and arquebusiers stationed so as to give the assailants a warm reception.

On they came, with the companies, or irregular masses, into which the multitude was divided, rushing forward each in its own dense column, with many a gay banner displayed, and many a bright gleam of light reflected from helmet, arrow, and spear-head, as they were tossed about in their disorderly array. As they drew near the enclosure, the Aztecs set up a hideous yell, or rather that shrill whistle used in fight by the nations of Anahuac, which rose far above the sound of shell and atabal and their other rude instruments of warlike melody. They followed this by a tempest of missiles,—stones, darts, and arrows,—which fell thick as rain on the besieged, while volleys of the

same kind descended from the crowded terraces in the neighborhood.[1]

The Spaniards waited until the foremost column had arrived within the best distance for giving effect to their fire, when a general discharge of artillery and arquebuses swept the ranks of the assailants and mowed them down by hundreds.[2] The Mexicans were familiar with the report of these formidable engines as they had been harmlessly discharged on some holiday festival; but never till now had they witnessed their murderous power. They stood aghast for a moment, as with bewildered looks they staggered under the fury of the fire;[3] but, soon rallying, the bold barbarians uttered a piercing cry, and rushed forward over the

[1] "Eran tantas las Piedras, que nos echaban con Hondas dentro en la Fortaleza, que no parecia sino que el Cielo las llovia; é las Flechas, y Tiraderas eran tantas, que todas las paredes y Patios estaban llenos, que casi no podiamos andar con ellas." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 134.) No wonder that they should have found some difficulty in wading through the arrows, if Herrera's account be correct, that *forty cart-loads* of them were gathered up and burnt by the besieged every day! Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.

[2] "Luego sin tardanza se juntáron los Mexicanos, en gran copia, puestos á punto de Guerra, que no parecia, sino que habian salido debajo de tierra todos juntos, y comenzáron luego á dar grita y pelear, y los Españoles les comenzáron á responder de dentro con toda la artillería que de nuebo habian traido, y con toda la gente que de nuevo habia venido, y los Españoles hiciéron gran destrozo en los Indios, con la artillería, arcabuzes, y ballestas y todo el otro artificio de pelear." (Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.) The good father waxes eloquent in his description of the battle-scene.

[3] The enemy presented so easy a mark, says Gomara, that the gunners loaded and fired with hardly the trouble of pointing their pieces. "Tan recio, que los artilleros sin asestar jugaban con los tiros." Crónica, cap. 106.

prostrate bodies of their comrades. A second and a third volley checked their career, and threw them into disorder, but still they pressed on, letting off clouds of arrows; while their comrades on the roofs of the houses took more deliberate aim at the combatants in the court-yard. The Mexicans were particularly expert in the use of the sling;[4] and the stones which they hurled from their elevated positions on the heads of their enemies did even greater execution than the arrows. They glanced, indeed, from the mail-covered bodies of the cavaliers, and from those who were sheltered under the cotton panoply, or *escaupil.* But some of the soldiers, especially the veterans of Cortés, and many of their Indian allies, had but slight defences, and suffered greatly under this stony tempest.

The Aztecs, meanwhile, had advanced close under the walls of the intrenchment, their ranks broken and disordered and their limbs mangled by the unintermitting fire of the Christians. But they still pressed on, under the very muzzles of the guns. They endeavored to scale the parapet, which, from its moderate height, was in itself a work of no great difficulty. But the moment they showed their heads above the rampart they were shot down by the unerring marksmen within, or stretched on the ground by a blow of a Tlascalan *maquahuitl.* Nothing daunted, others soon appeared to take the place of the fallen, and strove by raising themselves on the writhing bodies of their dying comrades, or by fixing their spears in the crevices of the

4 "Hondas, que eran la mas fuerte arma de pelea que los Mejicanos tenian." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

wall, to surmount the barrier. But the attempt proved equally vain.

Defeated here, they tried to effect a breach in the parapet by battering it with heavy pieces of timber. The works were not constructed on those scientific principles by which one part is made to overlook and protect another. The besiegers, therefore, might operate at their pleasure, with but little molestation from the garrison within, whose guns could not be brought into a position to bear on them, and who could mount no part of their own works for their defence without exposing their persons to the missiles of the whole besieging army. The parapet, however, proved too strong for the efforts of the assailants. In their despair, they endeavored to set the Christian quarters on fire, shooting burning arrows into them, and climbing up so as to dart their firebrands through the embrasures. The principal edifice was of stone. But the temporary defences of the Indian allies, and other parts of the exterior works, were of wood. Several of these took fire, and the flame spread rapidly among the light, combustible materials. This was a disaster for which the besieged were wholly unprepared. They had little water, scarcely enough for their own consumption. They endeavored to extinguish the flames by heaping on earth. But in vain. Fortunately, the great building was of materials which defied the destroying element. But the fire raged in some of the outworks, connected with the parapet, with a fury which could only be checked by throwing down a part of the wall itself, thus laying open a formidable breach. This, by the general's order, was speedily protected by a battery

of heavy guns, and a file of arquebusiers, who kept up an incessant volley through the opening on the assailants.[5]

The fight now raged with fury on both sides. The walls around the palace belched forth an unintermitting sheet of flame and smoke. The groans of the wounded and dying were lost in the fiercer battle-cries of the combatants, the roar of the artillery, the sharper rattle of the musketry, and the hissing sound of Indian missiles. It was the conflict of the European with the American; of civilized man with the barbarian; of the science of the one with the rude weapons and warfare of the other. And as the ancient walls of Tenochtitlan shook under the thunders of the artillery, it announced that the white man, the destroyer, had set his foot within her precincts.[6]

Night at length came, and drew her friendly mantle over the contest. The Aztec seldom fought by night. It brought little repose, however, to the Spaniards, in hourly expectation of an assault; and they found abundant occupation in restoring the breaches in their defences and in repairing their battered armor. The beleaguering host lay on their arms through the night,

5 "En la Fortaleza daban tan recio combate, que por muchas partes nos pusiéron fuego, y por la una se quemó mucha parte de ella, sin la poder remediar, hasta que la atajámos, cortando las paredes, y derrocando un pedazo que mató el fuego. É si no fuera por la mucha Guarda, que allí puse de Escopeteros, y Ballesteros, y otros tiros de pólvora, nos entraran á escala vista, sin los poder resistir." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 134.

6 Ibid., ubi supra.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 106.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.—Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte 1, cap. 26.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

giving token of their presence, now and then, by sending a stone or shaft over the battlements, or by a solitary cry of defiance from some warrior more determined than the rest, till all other sounds were lost in the vague, indistinct murmurs which float upon the air in the neighborhood of a vast assembly.

The ferocity shown by the Mexicans seems to have been a thing for which Cortés was wholly unprepared. His past experience, his uninterrupted career of victory with a much feebler force at his command, had led him to underrate the military efficiency, as well as the valor, of the Indians. The apparent facility with which the Mexicans had acquiesced in the outrages on their sovereign and themselves had led him to hold their courage, in particular, too lightly. He could not believe the present assault to be anything more than a temporary ebullition of the populace, which would soon waste itself by its own fury. And he proposed, on the following day, to sally out and inflict such chastisement on his foes as should bring them to their senses and show who was master in the capital.

With early dawn, the Spaniards were up and under arms; but not before their enemies had given evidence of their hostility by the random missiles which from time to time were sent into the enclosure. As the gray light of morning advanced, it showed the besieging army, far from being diminished in numbers, filling up the great square and neighboring avenues in more dense array than on the preceding evening. Instead of a confused, disorderly rabble, it had the appearance of something like a regular force, with its battalions distributed under their respective banners, the devices of

which showed a contribution from the principal cities and districts in the Valley. High above the rest was conspicuous the ancient standard of Mexico, with its well-known cognizance, an eagle pouncing on an ocelot, emblazoned on a rich mantle of feather-work. Here and there priests might be seen mingling in the ranks of the besiegers, and, with frantic gestures, animating them to avenge their insulted deities.

The greater part of the enemy had little clothing save the *maxtlatl*, or sash round the loins. They were variously armed, with long spears tipped with copper or flint, or sometimes merely pointed and hardened in the fire. Some were provided with slings, and others with darts having two or three points, with long strings attached to them, by which, when discharged, they could be torn away again from the body of the wounded. This was a formidable weapon, much dreaded by the Spaniards. Those of a higher order wielded the terrible *maquahuitl*, with its sharp and brittle blades of obsidian. Amidst the motley bands of warriors were seen many whose showy dress and air of authority intimated persons of high military consequence. Their breasts were protected by plates of metal, over which was thrown the gay surcoat of feather-work. They wore casques resembling in their form the head of some wild and ferocious animal, crested with bristly hair, or overshadowed by tall and graceful plumes of many a brilliant color. Some few were decorated with the red fillet bound round the hair, having tufts of cotton attached to it, which denoted by their number that of the victories they had won, and their own pre-eminent rank among the warriors of the nation. The

motley assembly plainly showed that priest, warrior, and citizen had all united to swell the tumult.

Before the sun had shot his beams into the Castilian quarters, the enemy were in motion, evidently preparing to renew the assault of the preceding day. The Spanish commander determined to anticipate them by a vigorous sortie, for which he had already made the necessary dispositions. A general discharge of ordnance and musketry sent death far and wide into the enemy's ranks, and, before they had time to recover from their confusion, the gates were thrown open, and Cortés, sallying out at the head of his cavalry, supported by a large body of infantry and several thousand Tlascalans, rode at full gallop against them. Taken thus by surprise, it was scarcely possible to offer much resistance. Those who did were trampled down under the horses' feet, cut to pieces with the broadswords, or pierced with the lances of the riders. The infantry followed up the blow, and the rout for the moment was general.

But the Aztecs fled only to take refuge behind a barricade, or strong work of timber and earth, which had been thrown across the great street through which they were pursued. Rallying on the other side, they made a gallant stand, and poured in turn a volley of their light weapons on the Spaniards, who, saluted with a storm of missiles at the same time from the terraces of the houses, were checked in their career and thrown into some disorder.[7]

Cortés, thus impeded, ordered up a few pieces of heavy ordnance, which soon swept away the barricades

[7] Carta del Exército, MS.

and cleared a passage for the army. But it had lost the momentum acquired in its rapid advance. The enemy had time to rally and to meet the Spaniards on more equal terms. They were attacked in flank, too, as they advanced, by fresh battalions, who swarmed in from the adjoining streets and lanes. The canals were alive with boats filled with warriors, who with their formidable darts searched every crevice or weak place in the armor of proof, and made havoc on the unprotected bodies of the Tlascalans. By repeated and vigorous charges, the Spaniards succeeded in driving the Indians before them; though many, with a desperation which showed they loved vengeance better than life, sought to embarrass the movements of their horses by clinging to their legs, or, more successfully, strove to pull the riders from their saddles. And woe to the unfortunate cavalier who was thus dismounted, — to be despatched by the brutal *maquahuitl*, or to be dragged on board a canoe to the bloody altar of sacrifice!

But the greatest annoyance which the Spaniards endured was from the missiles from the *azoteas*, consisting often of large stones, hurled with a force that would tumble the stoutest rider from his saddle. Galled in the extreme by these discharges, against which even their shields afforded no adequate protection, Cortés ordered fire to be set to the buildings. This was no very difficult matter, since, although chiefly of stone, they were filled with mats, cane-work, and other combustible materials, which were soon in a blaze. But the buildings stood separated from one another by canals and draw-bridges, so that the flames did not

easily communicate to the neighboring edifices. Hence the labor of the Spaniards was incalculably increased, and their progress in the work of destruction—fortunately for the city—was comparatively slow.[8] They did not relax their efforts, however, till several hundred houses had been consumed, and the miseries of a conflagration, in which the wretched inmates perished equally with the defenders, were added to the other horrors of the scene.

The day was now far spent. The Spaniards had been everywhere victorious. But the enemy, though driven back on every point, still kept the field. When broken by the furious charges of the cavalry, he soon rallied behind the temporary defences, which, at different intervals, had been thrown across the streets, and, facing about, renewed the fight with undiminished courage, till the sweeping away of the barriers by the cannon of the assailants left a free passage for the movements of their horse. Thus the action was a succession of rallying and retreating, in which both parties suffered much, although the loss inflicted on the Indians was probably tenfold greater than that of the Spaniards. But the Aztecs could better afford the loss of a hundred lives than their antagonists that of one. And, while the Spaniards showed an array broken and

[8] "Están todas en el agua, y de casa á casa vna puente leuadiza, passalla á nado, era cosa muy peligrosa; porque desde las açuteas tirauan tanta piedra, y cantos, que era cosa perdida ponernos en ello. Y demas desto, en algunas casas que les poniamos fuego, tardaua vna casa en se quemar vn dia entero, y no se podia pegar fuego de vna casa á otra; lo vno, por estar apartadas la vna de otra el agua en medio; y lo otro, por ser de açuteas." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

obviously thinned in numbers, the Mexican army, swelled by the tributary levies which flowed in upon it from the neighboring streets, exhibited, with all its losses, no sign of diminution. At length, sated with carnage, and exhausted by toil and hunger, the Spanish commander drew off his men, and sounded a retreat.[9]

On his way back to his quarters, he beheld his friend the secretary Duero, in a street adjoining, unhorsed, and hotly engaged with a body of Mexicans, against whom he was desperately defending himself with his poniard. Cortés, roused at the sight, shouted his war-cry, and, dashing into the midst of the enemy, scattered them like chaff by the fury of his onset; then, recovering his friend's horse, he enabled him to remount, and the two cavaliers, striking their spurs into their steeds, burst through their opponents and joined the main body of the army.[10] Such displays of generous gallantry were not uncommon in these engagements, which called forth more feats of personal adventure than battles with antagonists better skilled in the science of war. The chivalrous bearing of the general was emulated in full measure by Sandoval, De Leon,

9 "The Mexicans fought with such ferocity," says Diaz, "that, if we had had the assistance on that day of ten thousand Hectors, and as many Orlandos, we should have made no impression on them. There were several of our troops," he adds, "who had served in the Italian wars, but neither there nor in the battles with the Turk had they ever seen anything like the desperation shown by these Indians." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126. See, also, for the last pages, Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 135,—Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS.,—Probanza á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde, MS.,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 196.

10 Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 69.

Olid, Alvarado, Ordaz, and his other brave companions, who won such glory under the eye of their leader as prepared the way for the independent commands which afterwards placed provinces and kingdoms at their disposal.

The undaunted Aztecs hung on the rear of their retreating foes, annoying them at every step by fresh flights of stones and arrows; and, when the Spaniards had re-entered their fortress, the Indian host encamped around it, showing the same dogged resolution as on the preceding evening. Though true to their ancient habits of inaction during the night, they broke the stillness of the hour by insulting cries and menaces, which reached the ears of the besieged. "The gods have delivered you, at last, into our hands," they said; "Huitzilopochtli has long cried for his victims. The stone of sacrifice is ready. The knives are sharpened. The wild beasts in the palace are roaring for their offal. And the cages," they added, taunting the Tlascalans with their leanness, "are waiting for the false sons of Anahuac, who are to be fattened for the festival!" These dismal menaces, which sounded fearfully in the ears of the besieged, who understood too well their import, were mingled with piteous lamentations for their sovereign, whom they called on the Spaniards to deliver up to them.

Cortés suffered much from a severe wound which he had received in the hand in the late action. But the anguish of his mind must have been still greater as he brooded over the dark prospect before him. He had mistaken the character of the Mexicans. Their long and patient endurance had been a violence to their

natural temper, which, as their whole history proves, was arrogant and ferocious beyond that of most of the races of Anahuac. The restraint which, in deference to their monarch more than to their own fears, they had so long put on their natures, being once removed, their passions burst forth with accumulated violence. The Spaniards had encountered in the Tlascalan an open enemy, who had no grievance to complain of, no wrong to redress. He fought under the vague apprehension only of some coming evil to his country. But the Aztec, hitherto the proud lord of the land, was goaded by insult and injury, till he had reached that pitch of self-devotion which made life cheap in comparison with revenge. Armed thus with the energy of despair, the savage is almost a match for the civilized man; and a whole nation, moved to its depths by a common feeling, which swallows up all selfish considerations of personal interest and safety, becomes, whatever be its resources, like the earthquake and the tornado, the most formidable among the agencies of nature.

Considerations of this kind may have passed through the mind of Cortés, as he reflected on his own impotence to restrain the fury of the Mexicans, and resolved, in despite of his late supercilious treatment of Montezuma, to employ his authority to allay the tumult,—an authority so successfully exerted in behalf of Alvarado at an earlier stage of the insurrection. He was the more confirmed in his purpose on the following morning, when the assailants, redoubling their efforts, succeeded in scaling the works in one quarter and effecting an entrance into the enclosure. It is true,

they were met with so resolute a spirit that not a man of those who entered was left alive. But, in the impetuosity of the assault, it seemed, for a few moments, as if the place was to be carried by storm.[11]

Cortés now sent to the Aztec emperor to request his interposition with his subjects in behalf of the Spaniards. But Montezuma was not in the humor to comply. He had remained moodily in his quarters ever since the general's return. Disgusted with the treatment he had received, he had still further cause for mortification in finding himself the ally of those who were the open enemies of his nation. From his apartment he had beheld the tragical scenes in his capital, and seen another, the presumptive heir to his throne, taking the place which he should have occupied at the head of his warriors and fighting the battles of his country.[12] Distressed by his position, indignant at those who had placed him in it, he coldly answered, "What have I to do with Malinche? I do not wish to hear from him. I desire only to die. To what a state has my willingness to serve him reduced me!"[13] When urged still further to comply by Olid and Father

[11] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 107.

[12] Cortés sent Marina to ascertain from Montezuma the name of the gallant chief, who could be easily seen from the walls animating and directing his countrymen. The emperor informed him that it was his brother Cuitlahua, the presumptive heir to his crown, and the same chief whom the Spanish commander had released a few days previous. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.

[13] "¿Que quiere de mí ya Malinche, que yo no deseo viuir ni oille? pues en tal estado por su causa mi ventura me ha traido." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

Olmedo, he added, "It is of no use. They will neither believe me, nor the false words and promises of Malinche. You will never leave these walls alive." On being assured, however, that the Spaniards would willingly depart if a way were opened to them by their enemies, he at length—moved, probably, more by the desire to spare the blood of his subjects than of the Christians—consented to expostulate with his people.[14]

In order to give the greater effect to his presence, he put on his imperial robes. The *tilmatli*, his mantle of white and blue, flowed over his shoulders, held together by its rich clasp of the green *chalchivitl*. The same precious gem, with emeralds of uncommon size, set in gold, profusely ornamented other parts of his dress. His feet were shod with the golden sandals, and his brows covered by the *copilli*, or Mexican diadem, resembling in form the pontifical tiara. Thus attired, and surrounded by a guard of Spaniards and several Aztec nobles, and preceded by the golden wand, the symbol of sovereignty, the Indian monarch ascended the central turret of the palace. His presence was instantly recognized by the people, and, as the royal retinue advanced along the battlements, a change, as if by magic, came over the scene. The clang of instruments, the fierce cries of the assailants, were hushed, and a deathlike stillness pervaded the whole assembly, so fiercely agitated, but a few moments before, by the wild tumult of war! Many prostrated themselves on the ground; others bent the knee; and all turned with eager expectation towards the monarch whom

[14] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

they had been taught to reverence with slavish awe, and from whose countenance they had been wont to turn away as from the intolerable splendors of divinity. Montezuma saw his advantage; and, while he stood thus confronted with his awe-struck people, he seemed to recover all his former authority and confidence, as he felt himself to be still a king. With a calm voice, easily heard over the silent assembly, he is said by the Castilian writers to have thus addressed them:

"Why do I see my people here in arms against the palace of my fathers? Is it that you think your sovereign a prisoner, and wish to release him? If so, you have acted rightly. But you are mistaken. I am no prisoner. The strangers are my guests. I remain with them only from choice, and can leave them when I list. Have you come to drive them from the city? That is unnecessary. They will depart of their own accord, if you will open a way for them. Return to your homes, then. Lay down your arms. Show your obedience to me who have a right to it. The white men shall go back to their own land; and all shall be well again within the walls of Tenochtitlan."

As Montezuma announced himself the friend of the detested strangers, a murmur ran through the multitude; a murmur of contempt for the pusillanimous prince who could show himself so insensible to the insults and injuries for which the nation was in arms. The swollen tide of their passions swept away all the barriers of ancient reverence, and, taking a new direction, descended on the head of the unfortunate monarch, so far degenerated from his warlike ancestors. "Base Aztec," they exclaimed, "woman, coward! the

white men have made you a woman,—fit only to weave and spin!" These bitter taunts were soon followed by still more hostile demonstrations. A chief, it is said, of high rank, bent a bow or brandished a javelin with an air of defiance against the emperor,[15] when, in an instant, a cloud of stones and arrows descended on the spot where the royal train was gathered. The Spaniards appointed to protect his person had been thrown off their guard by the respectful deportment of the people during their lord's address. They now hastily interposed their bucklers. But it was too late. Montezuma was wounded by three of the missiles, one of which, a stone, fell with such violence on his head, near the temple, as brought him senseless to the ground. The Mexicans, shocked at their own sacrilegious act, experienced a sudden revulsion of feeling, and, setting up a dismal cry, dispersed, panic-struck, in different directions. Not one of the multitudinous array remained in the great square before the palace!

The unhappy prince, meanwhile, was borne by his attendants to his apartments below. On recovering from the insensibility caused by the blow, the wretchedness of his condition broke upon him. He had tasted the last bitterness of degradation. He had been reviled, rejected, by his people. The meanest of the rabble had raised their hands against him. He had nothing more to live for. It was in vain that Cortés and his officers endeavored to soothe the anguish of his spirit and fill him with better thoughts. He spoke not

[15] Acosta reports a tradition that Guatemozin, Montezuma's nephew, who himself afterwards succeeded to the throne, was the man that shot the first arrow. Lib. 7, cap. 26.

a word in answer. His wound, though dangerous, might still, with skilful treatment, not prove mortal. But Montezuma refused all the remedies prescribed for it. He tore off the bandages as often as they were applied, maintaining, all the while, the most determined silence. He sat with eyes dejected, brooding over his fallen fortunes, over the image of ancient majesty and present humiliation. He had survived his honor. But a spark of his ancient spirit seemed to kindle in his bosom, as it was clear he did not mean to survive his disgrace. From this painful scene the Spanish general and his followers were soon called away by the new dangers which menaced the garrison.[16]

[16] I have reported this tragical event, and the circumstances attending it, as they are given, in more or less detail, but substantially in the same way, by the most accredited writers of that and the following age, —several of them eye-witnesses. (See Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 136.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 70.—Acosta, ubi supra.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 5.) It is also confirmed by Cortés in the instrument granting to Montezuma's favorite daughter certain estates by way of dowry. (See Appendix, Part 2, No. 12.) Don Thoan Cano, indeed, who married this princess, assured Oviedo that the Mexicans respected the person of the monarch so long as they saw him, and were not aware, when they discharged their missiles, that he was present, being hid from sight by the shields of tne Spaniards. (See Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.) This improbable statement is repeated by the chaplain Gomara. (Crónica, cap. 107.) It is rejected by Oviedo, however, who says that Alvarado, himself present at the scene, in a conversation with him afterwards, explicitly confirmed the narrative given in the text. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.) The Mexicans gave a very different account of the transaction. According to them, Montezuma, together with the lords of Tezcuco and Tlatelolco, then detained as prisoners in the

fortress by the Spaniards, were all strangled by means of the *garrote*, and their dead bodies thrown over the walls to their countrymen. I quote the original of Father Sahagun, who gathered the story from the Aztecs themselves:

"De esta manera se determináron los Españoles á morir ó vencer varonilmente; y así habláron á todos los amigos Indios, y todos ellos estuviéron firmes en esta determinacion: y lo primero que hiciéron fué que diéron garrote á todos los Señores que tenian presos, y los echáron muertos fuera del fuerte: y antes que esto hiciesen les dijéron muchas cosas, y les hiciéron saber su determinacion, y que de ellos habia de comenzar esta obra, y luego todos los demas habian de ser muertos á sus manos, dijéronles, no es posible que vuestros Ídolos os libren de nuestras manos. Y desque les hubiéron dado Garrote, y viéron que estaban muertos, mandáronlos echar por las azoteas, fuera de la casa, en un lugar que se llama Tortuga de Piedra, porque allí estaba una piedra labrada á manera de Tortuga. Y desque supiéron y viéron los de á fuera, que aquellos Señores tan principales habian sido muertos por las manos de los Españoles, luego tomáron los cuerpos, y les hiciéron sus exequias, al modo de su Idolatría, y quemáron sus cuerpos, y tomáron sus cenizas, y las pusiéron en lugares apropiadas á sus dignidades y valor." Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 23.

It is hardly necessary to comment on the absurdity of this monstrous imputation, which, however, has found favor with some later writers. Independently of all other considerations, the Spaniards would have been slow to compass the Indian monarch's death, since, as the Tezcucan Ixtlilxochitl truly observes, it was the most fatal blow which could befall them, by dissolving the last tie which held them to the Mexicans. Hist. Chich., MS., ubi supra.

CHAPTER II.

STORMING OF THE GREAT TEMPLE. — SPIRIT OF THE AZTECS. — DISTRESSES OF THE GARRISON. — SHARP COMBATS IN THE CITY — DEATH OF MONTEZUMA.

1520.

OPPOSITE to the Spanish quarters, at only a few rods' distance, stood the great *teocalli* of Huitzilopochtli. This pyramidal mound, with the sanctuaries that crowned it, rising altogether to the height of near a hundred and fifty feet, afforded an elevated position that completely commanded the palace of Axayacatl, occupied by the Christians. A body of five or six hundred Mexicans, many of them nobles and warriors of the highest rank, had got possession of the *teocalli*, whence they discharged such a tempest of arrows on the garrison that no one could leave his defences for a moment without imminent danger; while the Mexicans, under shelter of the sanctuaries, were entirely covered from the fire of the besieged. It was obviously necessary to dislodge the enemy, if the Spaniards would remain longer in their quarters.

Cortés assigned this service to his chamberlain, Escobar, giving him a hundred men for the purpose, with orders to storm the *teocalli* and set fire to the sanctuaries. But that officer was thrice repulsed in the attempt, and, after the most desperate efforts, was

obliged to return with considerable loss and without accomplishing his object.

Cortés, who saw the immediate necessity of carrying the place, determined to lead the storming party himself. He was then suffering much from the wound in his left hand, which had disabled it for the present. He made the arm serviceable, however, by fastening his buckler to it,[1] and, thus crippled, sallied out at the head of three hundred chosen cavaliers and several thousand of his auxiliaries.

In the court-yard of the temple he found a numerous body of Indians prepared to dispute his passage. He briskly charged them; but the flat smooth stones of the pavement were so slippery that the horses lost their footing and many of them fell. Hastily dismounting, they sent back the animals to their quarters, and, renewing the assault, the Spaniards succeeded without much difficulty in dispersing the Indian warriors and opening a free passage for themselves to the *teocalli*. This building, as the reader may remember, was a huge pyramidal structure, about three hundred feet square at the base. A flight of stone steps on the outside, at one of the angles of the mound, led to a platform, or terraced walk, which passed round the building until it reached a similar flight of stairs directly over the preceding, that conducted to another landing as before. As there were five bodies or divisions of the *teocalli*, it became necessary to pass round its whole extent four

[1] "Salí fuera de la Fortaleza, aunque manco de la mano izquierda de una herida que el primer dia me habian dado: y liadá la rodela en el brazo fuý á la Torre con algunos Españoles, que me siguiéron." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 138.

times, or nearly a mile, in order to reach the summit, which, it may be recollected, was an open area, crowned only by the two sanctuaries dedicated to the Aztec deities.*

Cortés, having cleared a way for the assault, sprang up the lower stairway, followed by Alvarado, Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other gallant cavaliers of his little band, leaving a file of arquebusiers and a strong corps of Indian allies to hold the enemy in check at the foot of the monument. On the first landing, as well as on the several galleries above, and on the summit, the Aztec warriors were drawn up to dispute his passage. From their elevated position they showered down volleys of lighter missiles, together with heavy stones, beams, and burning rafters, which, thundering along the stairway, overturned the ascending Spaniards and carried desolation through their ranks. The more fortunate, eluding or springing over these obstacles, succeeded in gaining the first terrace; where, throwing themselves on their enemies, they compelled them, after a short resistance, to fall back. The assailants pressed on, effectually supported by a brisk fire of the musketeers from below, which so much galled the Mexicans in their exposed situation that they were glad to take shelter on the broad summit of the *teocalli*.

Cortés and his comrades were close upon their rear, and the two parties soon found themselves face to face on this aerial battle-field, engaged in mortal combat in

* See *ante*, pp. 138–141.—I have ventured to repeat the description of the temple here, as it is important that the reader, who may perhaps not turn to the preceding pages, should have a distinct image of it in his own mind before beginning the account of the combat.

presence of the whole city, as well as of the troops in the court-yard, who paused, as if by mutual consent, from their own hostilities, gazing in silent expectation on the issue of those above. The area, though somewhat smaller than the base of the *teocalli*, was large enough to afford a fair field of fight for a thousand combatants. It was paved with broad, flat stones. No impediment occurred over its surface, except the huge sacrificial block, and the temples of stone which rose to the height of forty feet, at the farther extremity of the arena. One of these had been consecrated to the Cross. The other was still occupied by the Mexican war-god. The Christian and the Aztec contended for their religions under the very shadow of their respective shrines; while the Indian priests, running to and fro, with their hair wildly streaming over their sable mantles, seemed hovering in mid-air, like so many demons of darkness urging on the work of slaughter!

The parties closed with the desperate fury of men who had no hope but in victory. Quarter was neither asked nor given; and to fly was impossible. The edge of the area was unprotected by parapet or battlement. The least slip would be fatal; and the combatants, as they struggled in mortal agony, were sometimes seen to roll over the sheer sides of the precipice together.[3]

[3] Many of the Aztecs, according to Sahagun, seeing the fate of such of their comrades as fell into the hands of the Spaniards on the narrow terraces below, voluntarily threw themselves headlong from the lofty summit and were dashed in pieces on the pavement. "Y los de arriba viendo á los de abajo muertos, y á los de arriba que los iban matando los que habian subido, comenzáron á arrojarse del cu abajo, desde lo alto, los cuales todos morian despeñados, quebrados brazos y piernas, y hechos pedazos, porque el cu era muy alto; y otros

Cortés himself is said to have had a narrow escape from this dreadful fate. Two warriors, of strong, muscular frames, seized on him, and were dragging him violently towards the brink of the pyramid. Aware of their intention, he struggled with all his force, and, before they could accomplish their purpose, succeeded in tearing himself from their grasp and hurling one of them over the walls with his own arm! The story is not improbable in itself, for Cortés was a man of uncommon agility and strength. It has been often repeated; but not by contemporary history.[4]

The battle lasted with unintermitting fury for three hours. The number of the enemy was double that of the Christians; and it seemed as if it were a contest which must be determined by numbers and brute force, rather than by superior science. But it was not so. The invulnerable armor of the Spaniard, his sword of matchless temper, and his skill in the use of it, gave him advantages which far outweighed the odds of physical strength and numbers. After doing all that the courage of despair could enable men to do, resistance grew fainter and fainter on the side of the Aztecs. One after another they had fallen. Two or three

los mesmos Españoles los arrojaban de lo alto del cu, y así todos cuantos allá habian subido de los Mexicanos, muriéron mala muerte." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.

[4] Among others, see Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9,—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 69,—and Solís, very circumstantially, as usual, Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 16.—The first of these authors had access to some contemporary sources, the chronicle of the old soldier, Ojeda, for example, not now to be met with. It is strange that so valiant an exploit should not have been communicated by Cortés himself, who cannot be accused of diffidence in such matters.

priests only survived, to be led away in triumph by the victors. Every other combatant was stretched a corpse on the bloody arena, or had been hurled from the giddy heights. Yet the loss of the Spaniards was not inconsiderable. It amounted to forty-five of their best men; and nearly all the remainder were more or less injured in the desperate conflict.[5]

The victorious cavaliers now rushed towards the sanctuaries. The lower story was of stone; the two upper were of wood. Penetrating into their recesses, they had the mortification to find the image of the Virgin and the Cross removed.[6] But in the other edifice they still beheld the grim figure of Huitzilopochtli, with his censer of smoking hearts, and the walls of his oratory reeking with gore,—not improbably of their own countrymen! With shouts of triumph

5 Captain Diaz, a little loth sometimes, is emphatic in his encomiums on the valor shown by his commander on this occasion. "Here Cortés showed himself a very man, such as he always was. Oh what a fighting, what a strenuous battle, did we have! It was a memorable thing to see us flowing with blood and full of wounds, and more than forty soldiers slain." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.) The pens of the old chroniclers keep pace with their swords in the display of this brilliant exploit:—"colla penna e colla spada," equally fortunate. See Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 138.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 106.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 69.

6 Archbishop Lorenzana is of opinion that this image of the Virgin is the same now seen in the church of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*! (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 138, nota.) In what way the Virgin survived the sack of the city and was brought to light again, he does not inform us. But the more difficult to explain, the more undoubted the miracle.

the Christians tore the uncouth monster from his niche, and tumbled him, in the presence of the horror-struck Aztecs, down the steps of the *teocalli.** They then set fire to the accursed building. The flames speedily ran up the slender towers, sending forth an ominous light over city, lake, and valley, to the remotest hut among the mountains. It was the funeral pyre of paganism, and proclaimed the fall of that sanguinary religion which had so long hung like a dark cloud over the fair regions of Anahuac![7]

Having accomplished this good work, the Spaniards descended the winding slopes of the *teocalli* with more free and buoyant step, as if conscious that the blessing of Heaven now rested on their arms. They passed through the dusky files of Indian warriors in the court-

[7] No achievement in the war struck more awe into the Mexicans than this storming of the great temple, in which the white men seemed to bid defiance equally to the powers of God and man. Hieroglyphical paintings minutely commemorating it were to be frequently found among the natives after the Conquest. The sensitive Captain Diaz intimates that those which he saw made full as much account of the wounds and losses of the Christians as the facts would warrant. (Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.) It was the only way in which the conquered could take their revenge.

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* [Sir Arthur Helps speaks, rather oddly, of Cortés having set fire to this image. Neither Cortés himself nor Bernal Diaz mentions any such attempt to burn what is described as a "huge block of basalt, covered with sculptured figures." It is now in the Museum at Mexico, having lain undiscovered in the great square, close to the site of the teocalli, till the end of the last century. "For some years after that it was kept buried, lest the sight of one of their old deities might be too exciting for the Indians, who had certainly not forgotten it, and secretly ornamented it with flowers as long as it remained above ground.' Tylor, Anahuac, p. 223.—ED.]

yard, too much dismayed by the appalling scenes they had witnessed to offer resistance, and reached their own quarters in safety. That very night they followed up the blow by a sortie on the sleeping town, and burned three hundred houses, the horrors of conflagration being made still more impressive by occurring at the hour when the Aztecs, from their own system of warfare, were least prepared for them.[8]

Hoping to find the temper of the natives somewhat subdued by these reverses, Cortés now determined, with his usual policy, to make them a vantage-ground for proposing terms of accommodation. He accordingly invited the enemy to a parley, and, as the principal chiefs, attended by their followers, assembled in the great square, he mounted the turret before occupied by Montezuma, and made signs that he would address them. Marina, as usual, took her place by his side, as his interpreter. The multitude gazed with earnest curiosity on the Indian girl, whose influence with the Spaniards was well known, and whose connection with the general, in particular, had led the Aztecs to designate him by her Mexican name of Malinche.[9] Cortés, speaking

[8] "Sequenti nocte, nostri erumpentes in vna viarum arci vicina, domos combussêre tercentum: in altera plerasque e quibus arci molestia fiebat. Ita nunc trucidando, nunc diruendo, et interdum vulnera recipiendo, in pontibus et in viis, diebus noctibusque multis laboratum est utrinque." (Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6.) In the number of actions and their general result, namely, the victories, barren victories, of the Christians, all writers are agreed. But as to time, place, circumstance, or order, no two hold together. How shall the historian of the present day make a harmonious tissue out of these motley and many-colored threads?

[9] It is the name by which she is still celebrated in the popular minstrelsy of Mexico. Was the famous Tlascalan mountain, *sierra de*

through the soft, musical tones of his mistress, told his audience they must now be convinced that they had nothing further to hope from opposition to the Spaniards. They had seen their gods trampled in the dust, their altars broken, their dwellings burned, their warriors falling on all sides. "All this," continued he, "you have brought on yourselves by your rebellion. Yet, for the affection the sovereign whom you have so unworthily treated stills bears you, I would willingly stay my hand, if you will lay down your arms and return once more to your obedience. But, if you do not," he concluded, "I will make your city a heap of ruins, and leave not a soul alive to mourn over it!"

But the Spanish commander did not yet comprehend the character of the Aztecs, if he thought to intimidate them by menaces. Calm in their exterior, and slow to move, they were the more difficult to pacify when roused; and now that they had been stirred to their inmost depths, it was no human voice that could still the tempest. It may be, however, that Cortés did not so much misconceive the character of the people. He may have felt that an authoritative tone was the only one he could assume with any chance of effect in his present position, in which milder and more conciliatory language would, by intimating a consciousness of inferiority, have too certainly defeated its own object.

It was true, they answered, he had destroyed their temples, broken in pieces their gods, massacred their countrymen. Many more, doubtless, were yet to fall

Malinche,—anciently "Mattalcueye,"—named in compliment to the Indian damsel? At all events, it was an honor well merited from her adopted countrymen.

under their terrible swords. But they were content so long as for every thousand Mexicans they could shed the blood of a single white man![10] "Look out," they continued, "on our terraces and streets; see them still thronged with warriors as far as your eyes can reach. Our numbers are scarcely diminished by our losses. Yours, on the contrary, are lessening every hour. You are perishing from hunger and sickness. Your provisions and water are failing. You must soon fall into our hands. *The bridges are broken down, and you cannot escape!*[11] There will be too few of you left to glut the vengeance of our gods!" As they concluded, they sent a volley of arrows over the battlements, which compelled the Spaniards to descend and take refuge in their defences.

The fierce and indomitable spirit of the Aztecs filled the besieged with dismay. All, then, that they had done and suffered, their battles by day, their vigils by night, the perils they had braved, even the victories they had won, were of no avail. It was too evident that they had no longer the spring of ancient superstition to work upon in the breasts of the natives, who, like some wild beast that has burst the bonds of his keeper, seemed now to swell and exult in the full consciousness of their strength. The annunciation respecting the bridges fell like a knell on the ears of the

[10] According to Cortés, they boasted, in somewhat loftier strain, they could spare twenty-five thousand for one: "á morir veinte y cinco mil de ellos, y uno de los nuestros." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 139.

[11] "Que todas las calzadas de las entradas de la ciudad eran deshechas, como de hecho passaba." Ibid., loc. cit.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

Christians. All that they had heard was too true; and they gazed on one another with looks of anxiety and dismay.

The same consequences followed which sometimes take place among the crew of a shipwrecked vessel. Subordination was lost in the dreadful sense of danger. A spirit of mutiny broke out, especially among the recent levies drawn from the army of Narvaez. They had come into the country from no motive of ambition, but attracted simply by the glowing reports of its opulence, and they had fondly hoped to return in a few months with their pockets well lined with the gold of the Aztec monarch. But how different had been their lot! From the first hour of their landing, they had experienced only trouble and disaster, privations of every description, sufferings unexampled, and they now beheld in perspective a fate yet more appalling. Bitterly did they lament the hour when they left the sunny fields of Cuba for these cannibal regions! And heartily did they curse their own folly in listening to the call of Velasquez, and still more in embarking under the banner of Cortés![12]

They now demanded, with noisy vehemence, to be led instantly from the city, and refused to serve longer in defence of a place where they were cooped up like sheep in the shambles, waiting only to be dragged to slaughter. In all this they were rebuked by the more

[12] "Pues tambien quiero dezir las maldiciones que los de Narvaez echauan á Cortés, y las palabras que dezian, que renegauan dél, y de la tierra, y aun de Diego Velasquez, que acá les embió, que bien pacíficos estauan en sus casas en la Isla de Cuba, y estavan embelesados, y sin sentido." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra

orderly, soldier-like conduct of the veterans of Cortés These latter had shared with their general the day of his prosperity, and they were not disposed to desert him in the tempest. It was, indeed, obvious, on a little reflection, that the only chance of safety, in the existing crisis, rested on subordination and union, and that even this chance must be greatly diminished under any other leader than their present one.

Thus pressed by enemies without and by factions within, that leader was found, as usual, true to himself. Circumstances so appalling as would have paralyzed a common mind only stimulated his to higher action and drew forth all its resources. He combined, what is most rare, singular coolness and constancy of purpose with a spirit of enterprise that might well be called romantic. His presence of mind did not now desert him. He calmly surveyed his condition and weighed the difficulties which surrounded him, before coming to a decision. Independently of the hazard of a retreat in the face of a watchful and desperate foe, it was a deep mortification to surrender up the city where he had so long lorded it as a master; to abandon the rich treasures which he had secured to himself and his followers; to forego the very means by which he had hoped to propitiate the favor of his sovereign and secure an amnesty for his irregular proceedings. This, he well knew, must, after all, be dependent on success. To fly now was to acknowledge himself further removed from the conquest than ever. What a close was this to a career so auspiciously begun! What a contrast to his magnificent vaunts! What a triumph would it

afford to his enemies! The governor of Cuba would be amply revenged.

But, if such humiliating reflections crowded on his mind, the alternative of remaining, in his present crippled condition, seemed yet more desperate.[13] With his men daily diminishing in strength and numbers, their provisions reduced so low that a small daily ration of bread was all the sustenance afforded to the soldier under his extraordinary fatigues,[14] with the breaches every day widening in his feeble fortifications, with his ammunition, in fine, nearly expended, it would be impossible to maintain the place much longer—and none but men of iron constitutions and tempers, like the Spaniards, could have held it so long—against the enemy. The chief embarrassment was as to the time and manner in which it would be expedient to evacuate the city. The best route seemed to be that of Tlacopan (Tacuba). For the causeway, the most dangerous part of the road, was but two miles long in that direction, and would, therefore, place the fugitives, much sooner than either of the other great avenues, on terra firma. Before his final departure, however, Cortés proposed to make another sally, in order to reconnoitre the ground, and, at the same time, divert the enemy's attention from his real purpose by a show of active operations.

[13] Notwithstanding this, in the petition or letter from Vera Cruz, addressed by the army to the Emperor Charles V., after the Conquest, the impórtunity of the soldiers is expressly stated as the principal motive that finally induced their general to abandon the city. Carta del Exército, MS.

[14] "The scarcity was such that the ration of the Indians was a small cake, and that of the Spaniards fifty grains of maize." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.

For some days his workmen had been employed in constructing a military machine of his own invention. It was called a *manta*, and was contrived somewhat on the principle of the mantelets used in the wars of the Middle Ages. It was, however, more complicated, consisting of a tower made of light beams and planks, having two chambers, one over the other. These were to be filled with musketeers, and the sides were provided with loop-holes, through which a fire could be kept up on the enemy. The great advantage proposed by this contrivance was to afford a defence to the troops against the missiles hurled from the terraces. These machines, three of which were made, rested on rollers, and were provided with strong ropes, by which they were to be dragged along the streets by the Tlascalan auxiliaries.[15]

The Mexicans gazed with astonishment on this warlike machinery, and, as the rolling fortresses advanced, belching forth fire and smoke from their entrails, the

[15] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 135.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 106.—Dr. Bird, in his picturesque romance of "Calavar," has made good use of these *mantas*, better, indeed, than can be permitted to the historian. He claims the privilege of the romancer; though it must be owned he does not abuse this privilege, for he has studied with great care the costume, manners, and military usages of the natives. He has done for them what Cooper has done for the wild tribes of the North,—touched their rude features with the bright coloring of a poetic fancy. He has been equally fortunate in his delineation of the picturesque scenery of the land. If he has been less so in attempting to revive the antique dialogue of the Spanish cavalier, we must not be surprised. Nothing is more difficult than the skilful execution of a modern antique. It requires all the genius and learning of Scott to execute it so that the connoisseur shall not detect the counterfeit.

enemy, incapable of making an impression on those within, fell back in dismay. By bringing the *mantas* under the walls of the houses, the Spaniards were enabled to fire with effect on the mischievous tenants of the *azoteas*, and, when this did not silence them, by letting a ladder, or light draw-bridge, fall on the roof from the top of the *manta*, they opened a passage to the terrace, and closed with the combatants hand to hand. They could not, however, thus approach the higher buildings, from which the Indian warriors threw down such heavy masses of stone and timber as dislodged the planks that covered the machines, or, thundering against their sides, shook the frail edifices to their foundations, threatening all within with indiscriminate ruin. Indeed, the success of the experiment was doubtful, when the intervention of a canal put a stop to their further progress.

The Spaniards now found the assertion of their enemies too well confirmed. The bridge which traversed the opening had been demolished; and, although the canals which intersected the city were, in general, of no great width or depth, the removal of the bridges not only impeded the movements of the general's clumsy machines, but effectually disconcerted those of his cavalry. Resolving to abandon the *mantas*, he gave orders to fill up the chasm with stone, timber, and other rubbish drawn from the ruined buildings, and to make a new passage-way for the army. While this labor was going on, the Aztec slingers and archers on the other side of the opening kept up a galling discharge on the Christians, the more defenceless from the nature of their occupation. When the work was

completed, and a safe passage secured, the Spanish cavaliers rode briskly against the enemy, who, unable to resist the shock of the steel-clad column, fell back with precipitation to where another canal afforded a similar strong position for defence.[16]

There were no less than seven of these canals intersecting the great street of Tlacopan,[17] and at every one the same scene was renewed, the Mexicans making a gallant stand and inflicting some loss, at each, on their persevering antagonists. These operations consumed two days, when, after incredible toil, the Spanish general had the satisfaction to find the line of communication completely re-established through the whole length of the avenue, and the principal bridges placed under strong detachments of infantry. At this juncture, when he had driven the foe before him to the farthest extremity of the street, where it touches on the causeway, he was informed that the Mexicans, disheartened by their reverses, desired to open a parley with him respecting the terms of an accommodation, and that their chiefs awaited his return for that purpose at the fortress. Overjoyed at the intelligence, he instantly rode back, attended by Alvarado, Sandoval, and about sixty of the cavaliers, to his quarters.

The Mexicans proposed that he should release the

[16] Carta del Exército, MS.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 140.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.

[17] Clavigero is mistaken in calling this the street of Iztapalapan. (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 120.) It was not the street by which the Spaniards entered, but by which they finally left the city, and is correctly indicated by Lorenzana as that of Tlacopan,—or, rather, Tacuba, into which the Spaniards corrupted the name. See p. 140, note.

two priests captured in the temple, who might be the bearers of his terms and serve as agents for conducting the negotiation. They were accordingly sent with the requisite instructions to their countrymen. But they did not return. The whole was an artifice of the enemy, anxious to procure the liberation of their religious leaders, one of whom was their *teoteuctli*, or high-priest, whose presence was indispensable in the probable event of a new coronation.

Cortés, meanwhile, relying on the prospects of a speedy arrangement, was hastily taking some refreshment with his officers, after the fatigues of the day, when he received the alarming tidings that the enemy were in arms again, with more fury than ever; that they had overpowered the detachments posted under Alvarado at three of the bridges, and were busily occupied in demolishing them. Stung with shame at the facility with which he had been duped by his wily foe, or rather by his own sanguine hopes, Cortés threw himself into the saddle, and, followed by his brave companions, galloped back at full speed to the scene of action. The Mexicans recoiled before the impetuous charge of the Spaniards. The bridges were again restored; and Cortés and his chivalry rode down the whole extent of the great street, driving the enemy, like frightened deer, at the points of their lances. But, before he could return on his steps, he had the mortification to find that the indefatigable foe, gathering from the adjoining lanes and streets, had again closed on his infantry, who, worn down by fatigue, were unable to maintain their position at one of the principal bridges. New swarms of warriors now poured in

on all sides, overwhelming the little band of Christian cavaliers with a storm of stones, darts, and arrows, which rattled like hail on their armor and on that of their well-barbed horses. Most of the missiles, indeed, glanced harmless from the good panoplies of steel, or thick quilted cotton, but, now and then, one better aimed penetrated the joints of the harness and stretched the rider on the ground.

The confusion became greater around the broken bridge. Some of the horsemen were thrown into the canal, and their steeds floundered wildly about without a rider. Cortés himself, at this crisis, did more than any other to cover the retreat of his followers. While the bridge was repairing, he plunged boldly into the midst of the barbarians, striking down an enemy at every vault of his charger, cheering on his own men, and spreading terror through the ranks of his opponents by the well-known sound of his battle-cry. Never did he display greater hardihood, or more freely expose his person, emulating, says an old chronicler, the feats of the Roman Cocles.[18] In this way he stayed the tide of assailants till the last man had crossed the bridge, when, some of the planks having given way, he was compelled to leap a chasm of full six feet

[18] It is Oviedo who finds a parallel for his hero in the Roman warrior; the same, to quote the spirit-stirring legend of Macaulay,

"who kept the bridge so well
In the brave days of old."

"Mui digno es Cortés que se compare este fecho suyo desta jornada al de Oracio Cocles, que se tocó de suso, porque con su esfuerzo é lanza sola dió tanto lugar, que los caballos pudieran pasar, é hizo desembarazar la puente é pasó, á pesar de los Enemigos, aunque con harto trabajo." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

in width, amidst a cloud of missiles, before he could place himself in safety.[19] A report ran through the army that the general was slain. It soon spread through the city, to the great joy of the Mexicans, and reached the fortress, where the besieged were thrown into no less consternation. But, happily for them, it was false. He, indeed, received two severe contusions on the knee, but in other respects remained uninjured. At no time, however, had he been in such extreme danger; and his escape, and that of his companions, were esteemed little less than a miracle. More than one grave historian refers the preservation of the Spaniards to the watchful care of their patron Apostle, St. James, who, in these desperate conflicts, was beheld careering on his milk-white steed at the head of the Christian squadrons, with his sword flashing lightning, while a lady robed in white—supposed to be the Virgin—was distinctly seen by his side, throwing dust in the eyes of the infidel! The fact is attested both by Spaniards and Mexicans,—by the latter after their conversion to Christianity. Surely, never was there a time when the interposition of their tutelar saint was more strongly demanded.[20]

[19] It was a fair leap, for a knight and horse in armor. But the general's own assertion to the emperor (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 142) is fully confirmed by Oviedo, who tells us he had it from several who were present: "Y segun lo que yo he entendido de algunos que presentes se halláron, demas de la resistencia de aquellos havia de la vna parte á la otra casi vn estado de saltar con el caballo sin le faltar muchas pedradas de diversas partes, é manos, é por ir él, é su caballo bien armados no los hiriéron; pero no dexó de quedar atormentado de los golpes que le diéron." Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra.

[20] Truly, "dignus vindice nodus"! The intervention of the celestial chivalry on these occasions is testified in the most unqualified manner

The coming of night dispersed the Indian battalions, which, vanishing like birds of ill omen from the field, left the well-contested pass in possession of the Spaniards. They returned, however, with none of the joyous feelings of conquerors to their citadel, but with slow step and dispirited, with weapons hacked, armor battered, and fainting under the loss of blood, fasting, and fatigue. In this condition they had yet to learn the tidings of a fresh misfortune in the death of Montezuma.[21]

by many respectable authorities. It is edifying to observe the combat going on in Oviedo's mind between the dictates of strong sense and superior learning, and those of the superstition of the age. It was an unequal combat, with odds sorely against the former, in the sixteenth century. I quote the passage, as characteristic of the times. "Afirman que se vido el Apóstol Santiago á caballo peleando sobre vn caballo blanco en favor de los Christianos; é decian los Indios que el caballo con los pies y manos é con la boca mataba muchos dellos, de forma, que en poco discurso de tiempo no pareció Indio, é reposáron los Christianos lo restante de aquel dia. Ya sé que los incrédulos ó poco devotos dirán, que mi ocupacion en esto destos miraglos, pues no los ví, es superflua, ó perder tiempo novelando, y yo hablo, que esto é mas se puede creer; pues que los gentiles é sin fé, é Idólatras escriben, que ovo grandes misterios é miraglos en sus tiempos, é aquellos sabemos que eran causados é fechos por el Diablo, pues mas fácil cosa es á Dios é á la inmaculata Vírgen Nuestra Señora é al glorioso Apóstol Santiago, é á los santos é amigos de Jesu Christo hacer esos miraglos, què de suso estan dichos, é otros maiores." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

[21] "Multi restiterunt lapidibus et iaculis confossi, fuit et Cortesius grauiter percussus, pauci evaserunt incolumes, et hi adeò languidi, vt neque lacertos erigere quirent. Postquam vero se in arcem receperunt, non commodè satis conditas dapes, quibus reficerentur, inuenerunt, nec fortè asperi maiicii panis bucellas, aut aquam potabilem, de vino aut carnibus sublata erat cura." (Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6.) See also, for the hard fighting described in the last pages, Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13,—Rel. Seg. de Cortés.

The Indian monarch had rapidly declined, since he had received his injury, sinking, however, quite as much under the anguish of a wounded spirit as under disease. He continued in the same moody state of insensibility as that already described; holding little communication with those around him, deaf to consolation, obstinately rejecting all medical remedies as well as nourishment. Perceiving his end approach, some of the cavaliers present in the fortress, whom the kindness of his manners had personally attached to him, were anxious to save the soul of the dying prince from the sad doom of those who perish in the darkness of unbelief. They accordingly waited on him, with Father Olmedo at their head, and in the most earnest manner implored him to open his eyes to the error of his creed, and consent to be baptized. But Montezuma—whatever may have been suggested to the contrary—seems never to have faltered in his hereditary faith, or to have contemplated becoming an apostate; for surely he merits that name in its most odious application, who, whether Christian or pagan, renounces his religion without conviction of its falsehood.[22] Indeed, it was a too implicit reliance on its oracles which had

ap. Lorenzana, pp. 140–142,—Carta del Exército, MS.,—Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte 1, cap. 26,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9, 10,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 107.

[22] The sentiment is expressed with singular energy in the verses of Voltaire:

> "Mais rénoncer aux dieux que l'on croit dans son cœur,
> C'est le crime d'un lâche, et non pas une erreur;
> C'est trahir à la fois, sous un masque hypocrite,
> Et le dieu qu'on préfère, et le dieu que l'on quitte:
> C'est mentir au Ciel même, à l'univers, à soi."
>
> ALZIRE, acte 5, sc. 5.

led him to give such easy confidence to the Spaniards. His intercourse with them had, doubtless, not sharpened his desire to embrace their communion; and the calamities of his country he might consider as sent by his gods to punish him for his hospitality to those who had desecrated and destroyed their shrines.[23]

When Father Olmedo, therefore, kneeling at his side, with the uplifted crucifix, affectionately besought him to embrace the sign of man's redemption, he coldly repulsed the priest, exclaiming, "I have but a few moments to live, and will not at this hour desert the

[23] Camargo, the Tlascalan convert, says he was told by several of the Conquerors that Montezuma was baptized at his own desire in his last moments, and that Cortés and Alvarado stood sponsors on the occasion. "Muchos afirman de los conquistadores que yo conocí, que estando en el artículo de la muerte, pidió agua de batismo é que fué batizado y murió Cristiano, aunque en esto hay grandes dudas y diferentes paresceres; mas como digo que de personas fidedignas conquistadores de los primeros desta tierra de quien fuímos informados, supímos que murió batizado y Cristiano, é que fuéron sus padrinos del batismo Fernando Cortés y Don Pedro de Alvarado." (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) According to Gomara, the Mexican monarch desired to be baptized before the arrival of Narvaez. The ceremony was deferred till Easter, that it might be performed with greater effect. But in the hurry and bustle of the subsequent scenes it was forgotten, and he died without the stain of infidelity having been washed away from him. (Crónica, cap. 107.) Torquemada, not often a Pyrrhonist where the honor of the faith is concerned, rejects these tales as irreconcilable with the subsequent silence of Cortés himself, as well as of Alvarado, who would have been loud to proclaim an event so long in vain desired by them. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 70.) The criticism of the father is strongly supported by the fact that neither of the preceding accounts is corroborated by writers of any weight, while they are contradicted by several, by popular tradition, and, it may be added, by one another.

faith of my fathers."[24] One thing, however, seemed to press heavily on Montezuma's mind. This was the fate of his children, especially of three daughters, whom he had by his two wives; for there were certain rites of marriage which distinguished the lawful wife from the concubine. Calling Cortés to his bedside, he earnestly commended these children to his care, as "the most precious jewels that he could leave him." He besought the general to interest his master, the emperor, in their behalf, and to see that they should not be left destitute, but be allowed some portion of their rightful inheritance. "Your lord will do this," he concluded, "if it were only for the friendly offices I have rendered the Spaniards, and for the love I have shown them,—though it has brought me to this condition! But for this I bear them no ill will."[25] Such,

[24] "Respondió, Que por la media hora que le quedaba de vida, no se queria apartar de la religion de sus Padres." (Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.) "Ya he dicho," says Diaz, "la tristeza que todos nosotros huvímos por ello, y aun al Frayle de la Merced, que siempre estaua con él, y no le pudo atraer á que se bolviesse Christiano." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 127.

[25] *Aunque no le pesaba dello;* literally, "although he did not repent of it." But this would be rather too much for human nature to assert; and it is probable the language of the Indian prince underwent some little change as it was sifted through the interpretation of Marina. The Spanish reader will find the original conversation, as reported by Cortés himself, in the remarkable document in the Appendix, Part 2, No. 12. The general adds that he faithfully complied with Montezuma's request, receiving his daughters, after the Conquest, into his own family, where, *agreeably to their royal father's desire, they were baptized*, and instructed in the doctrines and usages of the Christian faith. They were afterwards married to Castilian hidalgos, and handsome dowries were assigned them by the government. See note 36 of this chapter.

according to Cortés himself, were the words of the dying monarch. Not long after, on the 30th of June, 1520,[26] he expired in the arms of some of his own nobles, who still remained faithful in their attendance on his person. "Thus," exclaims a native historian, one of his enemies, a Tlascalan, "thus died the unfortunate Montezuma, who had swayed the sceptre with such consummate policy and wisdom, and who was held in greater reverence and awe than any other prince of his lineage, or any, indeed, that ever sat on a throne in this Western World. With him may be said to have terminated the royal line of the Aztecs, and the glory to have passed away from the empire, which under him had reached the zenith of its prosperity."[27] "The tidings of his death," says the old Castilian chronicler, Diaz, "were received with real grief by every cavalier and soldier in the army who had had access to his person; for we all loved him as a father,—and no wonder, seeing how good he was."[28] This simple but

[26] I adopt Clavigero's chronology, which cannot be far from truth (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 131.) And yet there are reasons for supposing he must have died at least a day sooner.

[27] "De suerte que le tiráron una pedrada con una honda y le diéron en la cabeza, de que vino á morir el desdichado Rey, habiendo gobernado este nuevo Mundo con la mayor prudencia y gobierno que se puede imaginar, siendo el mas tenido y reverenciado y adorado Señor que en el mundo ha habido, y en su linaje, como es cosa pública y notoria en toda la maquina deste Nuevo Mundo, donde con la muerte de tan gran Señor se acabáron los Reyes Culhuaques Mejicanos, y todo su poder y mando, estando en la mayor felicidad de su monarquía; y ansí no hay de que fiar en las cosas desta vida sino en solo Dios." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[28] "Y Cortés lloró por él, y todos nuestros Capitanes, y soldados: é hombres huvo entre nosotros de los que le conociamos, y trata-

emphatic testimony to his desert, at such a time, is in itself the best refutation of the suspicions occasionally entertained of his fidelity to the Christians.[29]

It is not easy to depict the portrait of Montezuma in its true colors, since it has been exhibited to us under two aspects, of the most opposite and contradictory character. In the accounts gathered of him by the

uamos, que tan llorado fué, como si fuera nuestro padre, y no nos hemos de maravillar dello, viendo que tan bueno era." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

[29] "He loved the Christians," says Herrera, "as well as could be judged from appearances." (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.) "They say," remarks the general's chaplain, "that Montezuma, though often urged to it, never consented to the death of a Spaniard, nor to the injury of Cortés, whom he loved exceedingly. But there are those who dispute this." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 107.) Don Thoan Cano assured Oviedo that during all the troubles of the Spaniards with the Mexicans, both in the absence of Cortés and after his return, the emperor did his best to supply the camp with provisions. (See Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.) And, finally, Cortés himself, in an instrument already referred to, dated six years after Montezuma's death, bears emphatic testimony to the good will he had shown the Spaniards, and particularly acquits him of any share in the late rising, which, says the Conqueror, "I had trusted to suppress through his assistance." See Appendix, Part 2, No. 12.—The Spanish historians, in general,—notwithstanding an occasional intimation of a doubt as to his good faith towards their countrymen,—make honorable mention of the many excellent qualities of the Indian prince. Solís, however, the most eminent of all, dismisses the account of his death with the remark that "his last hours were spent in breathing vengeance and maledictions against his people; until he surrendered up to Satan—with whom he had frequent communication in his lifetime—the eternal possession of his soul!" (Conquista de México, lib. 4, cap. 15.) Fortunately, the historiographer of the Indians could know as little of Montezuma's fate in the next world as he appears to have known of it in this. Was it bigotry, or a desire to set his own hero's character in a brighter light which led him thus unworthily to darken that of his Indian rival?

Spaniards on coming into the country, he was uniformly represented as bold and warlike, unscrupulous as to the means of gratifying his ambition, hollow and perfidious, the terror of his foes, with a haughty bearing which made him feared even by his own people. They found him, on the contrary, not merely affable and gracious, but disposed to waive all the advantages of his own position, and to place them on a footing with himself; making their wishes his law; gentle even to effeminacy in his deportment, and constant in his friendship while his whole nation was in arms against them. Yet these traits, so contradictory, were truly enough drawn. They are to be explained by the extraordinary circumstances of his position.

When Montezuma ascended the throne, he was scarcely twenty-three years of age. Young, and ambitious of extending his empire, he was continually engaged in war, and is said to have been present himself in nine pitched battles.[30] He was greatly renowned for his martial prowess, for he belonged to the *Quachictin*, the highest military order of his nation, and one into which but few even of its sovereigns had been admitted.[31] In later life, he preferred intrigue to violence, as more consonant to his character and priestly education. In this he was as great an adept as any prince of his time, and, by arts not very honorable to himself, succeeded in filching away much of the terri-

[30] "Dicen que venció nueve Batallas, i otros nueve Campos, en desafío vno á vno." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 107.

[31] One other only of his predecessors, Tizoc, is shown by the Aztec paintings to have belonged to this knightly order, according to Clavigero. Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 140.

tory of his royal kinsman of Tezcuco. Severe in the administration of justice, he made important reforms in the arrangement of the tribunals. He introduced other innovations in the royal household, creating new offices, introducing a lavish magnificence and forms of courtly etiquette unknown to his ruder predecessors. He was, in short, most attentive to all that concerned the exterior and pomp of royalty.[32] Stately and decorous, he was careful of his own dignity, and might be said to be as great an "actor of majesty" among the barbarian potentates of the New World as Louis the Fourteenth was among the polished princes of Europe.

He was deeply tinctured, moreover, with that spirit of bigotry which threw such a shade over the latter days of the French monarch. He received the Spaniards as the beings predicted by his oracles. The anxious dread with which he had evaded their proffered visit was founded on the same feelings which led him so blindly to resign himself to them on their approach. He felt himself rebuked by their superior genius. He at once conceded all that they demanded,—his treasures, his power, even his person. For their sake, he forsook his wonted occupations, his pleasures, his most familiar habits. He might be said to forego his nature, and, as his subjects asserted, to change his sex and become a woman. If we cannot refuse our contempt for the pusillanimity of the Aztec monarch, it should be

[32] "Era mas cauteloso, y ardidoso, que valeroso. En las Armas, y modo de su govierno, fué muy justiciero; en las cosas tocantes á ser estimado y tenido en su Dignidad y Majestad Real de condicion muy severo, aunque cuerdo y gracioso." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

mitigated by the consideration that his pusillanimity sprung from his superstition, and that superstition in the savage is the substitute for religious principle in the civilized man.

It is not easy to contemplate the fate of Montezuma without feelings of the strongest compassion;—to see him thus borne along the tide of events beyond his power to avert or control; to see him, like some stately tree, the pride of his own Indian forests, towering aloft in the pomp and majesty of its branches, by its very eminence a mark for the thunderbolt, the first victim of the tempest which was to sweep over its native hills! When the wise king of Tezcuco addressed his royal relative at his coronation, he exclaimed, "Happy the empire which is now in the meridian of its prosperity, for the sceptre is given to one whom the Almighty has in his keeping; and the nations shall hold him in reverence!"[33] Alas! the subject of this auspicious invocation lived to see his empire melt away like the winter's wreath; to see a strange race drop, as it were, from the clouds on his land; to find himself a prisoner in the palace of his fathers, the companion of those who were the enemies of his gods and his people; to be insulted, reviled, trodden in the dust, by the meanest of his subjects, by those who, a few months previous, had trembled at his glance; drawing his last breath in the halls of the stranger,—a lonely outcast in the heart of his own capital! He was the sad victim of destiny,—a destiny as dark and irresistible in its

[33] The whole address is given by Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib 4. cap. 68.

march as that which broods over the mythic legends of antiquity![34]

Montezuma, at the time of his death, was about forty-one years old, of which he reigned eighteen. His person and manners have been already described. He left a numerous progeny by his various wives, most of whom, having lost their consideration after the Conquest, fell into obscurity, as they mingled with the mass of the Indian population.[35] Two of them, however, a son and a daughter, who embraced Christianity, became the founders of noble houses in Spain.[36] The

[34] "Τέχνη δ' ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῷ.
Τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστρόφος;
Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι, μνήμονές τ' Ἐριννύες.
Τούτων ἄρ' Ζεὺς ἐστιν ἀσθενέστερος;
Οὐκουν ἂν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην."
ÆSCHYL., Prometh., v. 522–526.

[35] Señor de Calderon, the late Spanish minister at Mexico, informs me that he has more than once passed by an Indian dwelling where the Indians in his suite made a reverence, saying it was occupied by a descendant of Montezuma.

[36] This son, baptized by the name of Pedro, was descended from one of the royal concubines. Montezuma had two lawful wives. By the first of these, named Teçalco, he had a son, who perished in the flight from Mexico; and a daughter named Tecuichpo, who embraced Christianity and received the name of Isabella. She was married, when very young, to her cousin Guatemozin, and lived long enough after his death to give her hand to four Castilians, all of honorable family. From two of these, Don Thoan Cano and Don Juan Andrada, descended the illustrious families of the Cano and Andrada Montezuma. From the last came the counts of Miravalle noticed by Humboldt (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 73, note). See Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 325.—Montezuma, by his second wife, the princess Acatlan, left two daughters, named, after their conversion, Maria and Leonor. The former died without issue. Doña Leonor married a Spanish cavalier, Cristóval de Valderrama, from whom descended

government, willing to show its gratitude for the large extent of empire derived from their ancestor, conferred on them ample estates and important hereditary honors; and the counts of Montezuma and Tula, intermarrying with the best blood of Castile, intimated by their names and titles their illustrious descent from the royal dynasty of Mexico.[37]

the family of the Sotelos de Montezuma.—The royal genealogy is minutely exhibited in a Memorial setting forth the claims of Montezuma's grandsons to certain property in right of their respective mothers. The document, which is without date, is among the MSS. of Muñoz.

37 It is interesting to know that a descendant of the Aztec emperor, Don José Sarmiento Valladares, count of Montezuma, ruled as viceroy, from 1697 to 1701, over the dominions of his barbaric ancestors. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 93, note.)* Solís speaks of this noble house, grandees of Spain, who intermingled their blood with that of the Guzmans and the Mendozas. Clavigero has traced their descent from the emperor's son Iohualicahua, or Don Pedro Montezuma (as he was called after his baptism), down to the close of the eighteenth century. (See Solís, Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 15.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 302, tom. iii. p. 132.) The title of count was bestowed on the head of the family by Philip the Second, in 1556. In 1765, under Charles the Third, the count of Montezuma was made a grandee of Spain, and he was in receipt of a yearly pension of 40,000 *pesos*. (Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. i. p. 159.) The last of the line, of whom I have been able to obtain any intelligence, died not long since in this country. He was very wealthy, having large estates in Spain,—but was not, as it appears, very wise. When seventy years old or more, he passed over to Mexico, in the vain hope that the nation, in deference to his descent, might place

[* Señor Alaman, in a note on this passage, says it was not the viceroy, but his wife, Doña María Gerónima Montezuma, who was a descendant of the Aztec emperor. She was third countess of Montezuma in her own right, her husband's title being duke of Atlixco. —ED.]

Montezuma's death was a misfortune to the Spaniards. While he lived, they had a precious pledge in their hands, which, in extremity, they might possibly have turned to account. Now the last link was snapped which connected them with the natives of the country. But, independently of interested feelings, Cortés and his officers were much affected by his death, from personal considerations, and, when they gazed on the cold remains of the ill-starred monarch, they may have felt a natural compunction, as they contrasted his late flourishing condition with that to which his friendship for them had reduced him.

The Spanish commander showed all respect for his memory. His body, arrayed in its royal robes, was laid decently on a bier, and borne on the shoulders of his nobles to his subjects in the city. What honors, if any, indeed, were paid to his remains, is uncertain. A sound of wailing, distinctly heard in the western quarters of the capital, was interpreted by the Spaniards into the moans of a funeral procession, as it bore the body to be laid among those of his ancestors, under the princely shades of Chapoltepec.[38] Others state that it was removed to a burial-place in the city named Copalco, and there burned with the usual solemnities

him on the throne of his Indian ancestors, so recently occupied by the presumptuous Iturbide. But the modern Mexicans, with all their detestation of the old Spaniards, showed no respect for the royal blood of the Aztecs. The unfortunate nobleman retired to New Orleans, where he soon after put an end to his existence by blowing out his brains,—not for ambition, however, if report be true, but disappointed love!

[38] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 107.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.

and signs of lamentation by his chiefs, but not without some unworthy insults from the Mexican populace.[39] Whatever be the fact, the people, occupied with the stirring scenes in which they were engaged, were probably not long mindful of the monarch who had taken no share in their late patriotic movements. Nor is it strange that the very memory of his sepulchre should be effaced in the terrible catastrophe which afterwards overwhelmed the capital and swept away every landmark from its surface.

[39] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 7.

CHAPTER III.

COUNCIL OF WAR.—SPANIARDS EVACUATE THE CITY.—NOCHE TRISTE, OR "THE MELANCHOLY NIGHT."—TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER.—HALT FOR THE NIGHT.—AMOUNT OF LOSSES.

1520.

THERE was no longer any question as to the expediency of evacuating the capital. The only doubt was as to the time of doing so, and the route. The Spanish commander called a council of officers to deliberate on these matters. It was his purpose to retreat on Tlascala, and in that capital to decide, according to circumstances, on his future operations. After some discussion, they agreed on the causeway of Tlacopan as the avenue by which to leave the city. It would, indeed, take them back by a circuitous route, considerably longer than either of those by which they had approached the capital. But, for that reason, it would be less likely to be guarded, as least suspected; and the causeway itself, being shorter than either of the other entrances, would sooner place the army in comparative security on the main land.

There was some difference of opinion in respect to the hour of departure. The daytime, it was argued by some, would be preferable, since it would enable them to see the nature and extent of their danger and

to provide against it. Darkness would be much more likely to embarrass their own movements than those of the enemy, who were familiar with the ground. A thousand impediments would occur in the night, which might prevent their acting in concert, or obeying, or even ascertaining, the orders of the commander. But, on the other hand, it was urged that the night presented many obvious advantages in dealing with a foe who rarely carried his hostilities beyond the day. The late active operations of the Spaniards had thrown the Mexicans off their guard, and it was improbable they would anticipate so speedy a departure of their enemies. With celerity and caution they might succeed, therefore, in making their escape from the town, possibly over the causeway, before their retreat should be discovered; and, could they once get beyond that pass of peril, they felt little apprehension for the rest.

These views were fortified, it is said, by the counsels of a soldier named Botello, who professed the mysterious science of judicial astrology. He had gained credit with the army by some predictions which had been verified by the events; those lucky hits which make chance pass for calculation with the credulous multitude.[1] This man recommended to his countrymen by all means to evacuate the place in the night, as the hour most propitious to them, although he should perish in it. The event proved the astrologer better

[1] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—The astrologer predicted that Cortés would be reduced to the greatest extremity of distress, and afterwards come to great honor and fortune. (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.) He showed himself as cunning in his art as the West Indian sibyl who foretold the destiny of the unfortunate Josephine.

acquainted with his own horoscope than with that of others.[2]

It is possible Botello's predictions had some weight in determining the opinion of Cortés. Superstition was the feature of the age, and the Spanish general, as we have seen, had a full measure of its bigotry. Seasons of gloom, moreover, dispose the mind to a ready acquiescence in the marvellous. It is, however, quite as probable that he made use of the astrologer's opinion, finding it coincided with his own, to influence that of his men and inspire them with higher confidence. At all events, it was decided to abandon the city that very night.

The general's first care was to provide for the safe transportation of the treasure. Many of the common soldiers had converted their share of the prize, as we have seen, into gold chains, collars, or other ornaments, which they easily carried about their persons. But the royal fifth, together with that of Cortés himself, and much of the rich booty of the principal cavaliers, had been converted into bars and wedges of solid gold, and deposited in one of the strong apartments of the palace. Cortés delivered the share belonging to the crown to the royal officers, assigning them one of the strongest horses, and a guard of Castilian soldiers, to transport it.[3] Still, much of the treasure, belonging

[2] "Pues al astrólogo Botello, no le aprouechó su astrología, que tambien allí murió." Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

[3] The disposition of the treasure has been stated with some discrepancy, though all agree as to its ultimate fate. The general himself did not escape the imputation of negligence, and even peculation, most unfounded, from his enemies. The account in the text is substantiated by the evidence, under oath, of the most respectable names

both to the crown and to individuals, was necessarily abandoned, from the want of adequate means of conveyance. The metal lay scattered in shining heaps along the floor, exciting the cupidity of the soldiers. "Take what you will of it," said Cortés to his men. "Better you should have it, than these Mexican hounds.[4] But be careful not to overload yourselves. He travels safest in the dark night who travels lightest." His own more wary followers took heed to his counsel, helping themselves to a few articles of least bulk, though, it might be, of greatest value.[5] But the troops of Narvaez, pining for riches of which they had heard so much and hitherto seen so little, showed no such discretion. To them it seemed as if the very mines of Mexico were turned up before them, and, rushing on the treacherous spoil, they greedily loaded them-

in the expedition, as given in the instrument already more than once referred to. "Hizo sacar el oro é joyas de sus Altezas é le dió é entregó á los otros oficiales Alcaldes é Regidores, é les dixo á la rason que así se lo entregó, que todos viesen el mejor modo é manera que habia para lo poder salvar, que él allí estaba para por su parte hacer lo que fuese posible é poner su persona á qualquier trance é riesgo que sobre lo salvar le viniese. . . . El qual les dió para ello una muy buena yegua, é quatro ó cinco Españoles de mucha confianza, á quien se encargó la dha yegua cargado con el otro oro." Probanza á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde.

4 "Desde aquí se lo doi, como se ha de quedar aquí perdido entre estos perros." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

5 Captain Diaz tells us that he contented himself with four *chalchivitl*,—the green stone so much prized by the natives,—which he cunningly picked out of the royal coffers before Cortés' majordomo had time to secure them. The prize proved of great service, by supplying him the means of obtaining food and medicine when in great extremity, afterwards, from the people of the country. Ibid., loc. cit.

selves with as much of it, not merely as they could accommodate about their persons, but as they could stow away in wallets, boxes, or any other means of conveyance at their disposal.[6]

Cortés next arranged the order of march. The van, composed of two hundred Spanish foot, he placed under the command of the valiant Gonzalo de Sandoval, supported by Diego de Ordaz, Francisco de Lujo, and about twenty other cavaliers. The rear-guard, constituting the strength of the infantry, was intrusted to Pedro de Alvarado and Velasquez de Leon. The general himself took charge of the "battle," or centre, in which went the baggage, some of the heavy guns, most of which, however, remained in the rear, the treasure, and the prisoners. These consisted of a son and two daughters of Montezuma, Cacama, the deposed lord of Tezcuco, and several other nobles, whom Cortés retained as important pledges in his future negotiations with the enemy. The Tlascalans were distributed pretty equally among the three divisions; and Cortés had under his immediate command a hundred picked soldiers, his own veterans most attached to his service, who, with Cristóval de Olid, Francisco de Morla, Alonso de Avila, and two or three other cavaliers, formed a select corps, to act wherever occasion might require.

The general had already superintended the construction of a portable bridge to be laid over the open canals in the causeway. This was given in charge to an officer named Magarino, with forty soldiers under his orders, all pledged to defend the passage to the last

[6] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra.

extremity. The bridge was to be taken up when the entire army had crossed one of the breaches, and transported to the next. There were three of these openings in the causeway, and most fortunate would it have been for the expedition if the foresight of the commander had provided the same number of bridges. But the labor would have been great, and time was short.[7]

At midnight the troops were under arms, in readiness for the march. Mass was performed by Father Olmedo, who invoked the protection of the Almighty through the awful perils of the night. The gates were thrown open, and on the first of July, 1520, the Spaniards for the last time sallied forth from the walls of the ancient fortress, the scene of so much suffering and such indomitable courage.[8]

The night was cloudy, and a drizzling rain, which fell without intermission, added to the obscurity. The great square before the palace was deserted, as, indeed, it had been since the fall of Montezuma. Steadily,

[7] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 143.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 47.

[8] There is some difficulty in adjusting the precise date of their departure, as, indeed, of most events in the Conquest; attention to chronology being deemed somewhat superfluous by the old chroniclers. Ixtlilxochitl, Gomara, and others fix the date at July 10th. But this is wholly contrary to the letter of Cortés, which states that the army reached Tlascala on the eighth of July, not the tenth, as Clavigero misquotes him (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. pp. 135, 136, nota); and from the general's accurate account of their progress each day, it appears that they left the capital on the last night of June, or rather the morning of July 1st. It was the night, he also adds, following the affair of the bridges in the city. Comp. Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 142-149.

and as noiselessly as possible, the Spaniards held their way along the great street of Tlacopan, which so lately had resounded with the tumult of battle. All was now hushed in silence; and they were only reminded of the past by the occasional presence of some solitary corpse, or a dark heap of the slain, which too plainly told where the strife had been hottest. As they passed along the lanes and alleys which opened into the great street, or looked down the canals, whose polished surface gleamed with a sort of ebon lustre through the obscurity of night, they easily fancied that they discerned the shadowy forms of their foe lurking in ambush and ready to spring on them. But it was only fancy; and the city slept undisturbed even by the prolonged echoes of the tramp of the horses and the hoarse rumbling of the artillery and baggage-trains. At length, a lighter space beyond the dusky line of buildings showed the van of the army that it was emerging on the open causeway. They might well have congratulated themselves on having thus escaped the dangers of an assault in the city itself, and that a brief time would place them in comparative safety on the opposite shore. But the Mexicans were not all asleep.

As the Spaniards drew near the spot where the street opened on the causeway, and were preparing to lay the portable bridge across the uncovered breach, which now met their eyes, several Indian sentinels, who had been stationed at this, as at the other approaches to the city, took the alarm, and fled, rousing their countrymen by their cries. The priests, keeping their night-watch on the summit of the *teocallis*, instantly caught the tidings

and sounded their shells, while the huge drum in the desolate temple of the war-god sent forth those solemn tones, which, heard only in seasons of calamity, vibrated through every corner of the capital. The Spaniards saw that no time was to be lost. The bridge was brought forward and fitted with all possible expedition. Sandoval was the first to try its strength, and, riding across, was followed by his little body of chivalry, his infantry, and Tlascalan allies, who formed the first division of the army. Then came Cortés and his squadrons, with the baggage, ammunition-wagons, and a part of the artillery. But before they had time to defile across the narrow passage, a gathering sound was heard, like that of a mighty forest agitated by the winds. It grew louder and louder, while on the dark waters of the lake was heard a plashing noise, as of many oars. Then came a few stones and arrows striking at random among the hurrying troops. They fell every moment faster and more furious, till they thickened into a terrible tempest, while the very heavens were rent with the yells and war-cries of myriads of combatants, who seemed all at once to be swarming over land and lake!

The Spaniards pushed steadily on through this arrowy sleet, though the barbarians, dashing their canoes against the sides of the causeway, clambered up and broke in upon their ranks. But the Christians, anxious only to make their escape, declined all combat except for self-preservation. The cavaliers, spurring forward their steeds, shook off their assailants and rode over their prostrate bodies, while the men on foot with their good swords or the butts of their pieces

drove them headlong again down the sides of the dike.

But the advance of several thousand men, marching, probably, on a front of not more than fifteen or twenty abreast, necessarily required much time, and the leading files had already reached the second breach in the causeway before those in the rear had entirely traversed the first.[9] Here they halted, as they had no means of effecting a passage, smarting all the while under unintermitting volleys from the enemy, who were clustered thick on the waters around this second opening. Sorely distressed, the van-guard sent repeated messages to the rear to demand the portable bridge. At length the last of the army had crossed, and Magarino and his sturdy followers endeavored to raise the ponderous framework. But it stuck fast in the sides of the dike. In vain they strained every nerve. The weight of so many men and horses, and above all of the heavy artillery, had wedged the timbers so firmly in the stones and earth that it was beyond their power to dislodge them. Still they labored amidst a torrent of missiles, until, many of them slain, and all wounded, they were obliged to abandon the attempt.

The tidings soon spread from man to man, and no sooner was their dreadful import comprehended than a cry of despair arose, which for a moment drowned all the noise of conflict. All means of retreat were cut

[9] [This second breach, says Ramirez, "the scene of the rout and slaughter of the Spaniards, was in front of *San Hipolito*, where a chapel was built, to commemorate the event, and dedicated to the *Martyrs*,—though assuredly none of those who had fallen there had any claim to the crown of martyrdom." Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 104.]

off. Scarcely hope was left. The only hope was in such desperate exertions as each could make for himself. Order and subordination were at an end. Intense danger produced intense selfishness. Each thought only of his own life. Pressing forward, he trampled down the weak and the wounded, heedless whether it were friend or foe. The leading files, urged on by the rear, were crowded on the brink of the gulf. Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other cavaliers dashed into the water. Some succeeded in swimming their horses across. Others failed, and some, who reached the opposite bank, being overturned in the ascent, rolled headlong with their steeds into the lake. The infantry followed pellmell, heaped promiscuously on one another, frequently pierced by the shafts or struck down by the war-clubs of the Aztecs; while many an unfortunate victim was dragged half stunned on board their canoes, to be reserved for a protracted but more dreadful death.[10]

The carnage raged fearfully along the length of the causeway. Its shadowy bulk presented a mark of sufficient distinctness for the enemy's missiles, which often prostrated their own countrymen in the blind fury of the tempest. Those nearest the dike, running their canoes alongside, with a force that shattered them to pieces, leaped on the land, and grappled with the Christians, until both came rolling down the side of

[10] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 143.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 47.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 24.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6. -Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 4.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS.

the causeway together. But the Aztec fell among his friends, while his antagonist was borne away in triumph to the sacrifice. The struggle was long and deadly. The Mexicans were recognized by their white cotton tunics, which showed faint through the darkness. Above the combatants rose a wild and discordant clamor, in which horrid shouts of vengeance were mingled with groans of agony, with invocations of the saints and the blessed Virgin, and with the screams of women;[11] for there were several women, both natives and Spaniards, who had accompanied the Christian camp. Among these, one named María de Estrada is particularly noticed for the courage she displayed, battling with broadsword and target like the stanchest of the warriors.[12]

The opening in the causeway, meanwhile, was filled up with the wreck of matter which had been forced into it, ammunition-wagons, heavy guns, bales of rich stuffs scattered over the waters, chests of solid ingots, and bodies of men and horses, till over this dismal ruin a passage was gradually formed, by which those in the rear were enabled to clamber to the other side.[13]

[11] "Pues la grita, y lloros, y lástimas q̃ dezía demãdando socorro: Ayudadme, q̃ me ahogo, otros: Socorredme, q̃ me matã, otros demãdando ayuda á N. Señora Santa María, y á Señor Santiago." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

[12] "In this combat María de Estrada, oblivious of her sex, showed herself most valorous, and armed with sword and shield did marvellous deeds, rushing into the midst of the enemy with a courage and spirit equal to that of the bravest of men. . . . This lady became the wife of Pedro Sanchez Farfan, and the village of Tetela was granted to them *en encomienda*." Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 72.

[13] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Con-

Cortés, it is said, found a place that was fordable, where, halting, with the water up to his saddle-girths, he endeavored to check the confusion, and lead his followers by a safer path to the opposite bank. But his voice was lost in the wild uproar, and finally, hurrying on with the tide, he pressed forwards with a few trusty cavaliers, who remained near his person, to the van; but not before he had seen his favorite page, Juan de Salazar, struck down, a corpse, by his side. Here he found Sandoval and his companions, halting before the third and last breach, endeavoring to cheer on their followers to surmount it. But their resolution faltered. It was wide and deep; though the passage was not so closely beset by the enemy as the preceding ones. The cavaliers again set the example by plunging into the water. Horse and foot followed as they could, some swimming, others with dying grasp clinging to the manes and tails of the struggling animals. Those fared best, as the general had predicted, who travelled lightest; and many were the unfortunate wretches who, weighed down by the fatal gold which they loved so well, were buried with it in the salt floods of the lake.[14] Cortés, with his gallant comrades,

quista, cap. 128.—" Por la gran priesa que daban de ambas partes de el camino, comenzáron á caer en aquel foso, y cayéron juntos, que de Españoles, que de Indios y de caballos, y de cargas, el foso se hinchó hasta arriba, cayendo los unos sobre los otros, y los otros sobre los otros, de manera que todos los del bagage quedáron allí ahogados, y los de la retaguardia pasáron sobre los muertos." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 24.

[14] " É los que habian ido con Narvaez arrojáronse en la sala, é cargáronse de aquel oro é plata quanto pudiéron; pero los menos lo gozáron, porque la carga no los dexaba pelear, é los Indios los toma-

Olid, Morla, Sandoval, and some few others, still kept in the advance, leading his broken remnant off the fatal causeway. The din of battle lessened in the distance; when the rumor reached them that the rear-guard would be wholly overwhelmed without speedy relief. It seemed almost an act of desperation; but the generous hearts of the Spanish cavaliers did not stop to calculate danger when the cry for succor reached them. Turning their horses' bridles, they galloped back to the theatre of action, worked their way through the press, swam the canal, and placed themselves in the thick of the *mêlée* on the opposite bank.[15]

The first gray of the morning was now coming over the waters. It showed the hideous confusion of the scene which had been shrouded in the obscurity of night. The dark masses of combatants, stretching along the dike, were seen struggling for mastery, until the very causeway on which they stood appeared to tremble, and reel to and fro, as if shaken by an earthquake; while the bosom of the lake, as far as the eye could reach, was darkened by canoes crowded with warriors, whose spears and bludgeons, armed with blades of "volcanic glass," gleamed in the morning light.

The cavaliers found Alvarado unhorsed, and defending himself with a poor handful of followers against an overwhelming tide of the enemy. His good steed, which had borne him through many a hard fight, had

ban vivos cargados; é á otros llevaban arrastrando, é á otros mataban allí; É así no se salvaron sino los desocupados é que iban en la delantera." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

[15] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

fallen under him.[16] He was himself wounded in several places, and was striving in vain to rally his scattered column, which was driven to the verge of the canal by the fury of the enemy, then in possession of the whole rear of the causeway, where they were reinforced every hour by fresh combatants from the city. The artillery in the earlier part of the engagement had not been idle, and its iron shower, sweeping along the dike, had mowed down the assailants by hundreds. But nothing could resist their impetuosity. The front ranks, pushed on by those behind, were at length forced up to the pieces, and, pouring over them like a torrent, overthrew men and guns in one general ruin. The resolute charge of the Spanish cavaliers, who had now arrived, created a temporary check, and gave time for their countrymen to make a feeble rally. But they were speedily borne down by the returning flood. Cortés and his companions were compelled to plunge again into the lake,—though all did not escape. Alvarado stood on the brink for a moment, hesitating what to do. Unhorsed as he was, to throw himself into the water, in the face of the hostile canoes that now swarmed around the opening, afforded but a desperate chance of safety. He had but a second for thought. He was a man of powerful frame, and despair gave him unnatural energy. Setting his long lance firmly on the wreck which strewed the bottom of the lake, he sprung forward with all his might, and cleared the wide gap at a leap! Aztecs and Tlascalans gazed

[16] "Luego encontráron con Pedro de Alvarado bien herido con vna lança en la mano á pie, que la yegua alaçana ya se la auian muerto." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

in stupid amazement, exclaiming, as they beheld the incredible feat, "This is truly the *Tonatiuh*,—the child of the Sun!"[17] The breadth of the opening is not given. But it was so great that the valorous captain Diaz, who well remembered the place, says the leap was impossible to any man.[18] Other contemporaries, however, do not discredit the story.[19] It was, beyond doubt, matter of popular belief at the time; it is to this day familiarly known to every inhabitant of the capital; and the name of the *Salto de Alvarado*,

[17] "Y los amigos vista tan gran hazaña quedáron maravillados, y al instante que esto viéron se arrojáron por el suelo postrados por tierra en señal de hecho tan heroico, espantable y raro, que ellos no habian visto hacer á ningun hombre, y ansí adoráron al Sol, comiendo puñados de tierra, arrancando yervas del campo, diciendo á grandes voces, verdaderamente que este hombre es *hijo del Sol*." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) This writer consulted the process instituted by Alvarado's heirs, in which they set forth the merits of their ancestor, as attested by the most valorous captains of the Tlascalan nation, present at the Conquest. It *may be* that the famous leap was among these "merits" of which the historian speaks. M. de Humboldt, citing Camargo, so considers it. (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 75.) This would do more than anything else to establish the fact. But Camargo's language does not seem to me necessarily to warrant the inference.

[18] "Se llama aora la puente del salto de Alvarado: y platicauamos muchos soldados sobre ello, y no hallavamos razon, ni soltura de vn hombre que tal saltasse." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

[19] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, ubi supra.—Oviedc, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Which last author, however, frankly says that many who had seen the place declared that it seemed to them impossible. "Fué tan estremado de grande el salto, que á muchos hombres que han visto aquello, he oido decir que parece cosa imposible haberlo podido saltar ninguno hombre humano. En fin él lo saltó é ganó por ello la vida, é perdiéronla muchos que atras quedaban."

"Alvarado's Leap," given to the spot, still commemorates an exploit which rivalled those of the demi-gods of Grecian fable.[20]

Cortés and his companions now rode forward to the front, where the troops, in a loose, disorderly manner, were marching off the fatal causeway. A few only of the enemy hung on their rear, or annoyed them by

[20] The spot is pointed out to every traveller. It is where a ditch, of no great width, is traversed by a small bridge not far from the western extremity of the Alameda. A house, lately erected there, may somewhat interfere with the meditations of the antiquary. (Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. i. p. 202.) As the place received its name in Alvarado's time, the story could scarcely have been discountenanced by him. But, since the length of the leap, strange to say, is nowhere given, the reader can have no means of passing his own judgment on its probability. [Unfortunately for the lovers of the marvellous, another version is now given of the account of Alvarado's escape, which deprives him of the glory claimed for him by this astounding feat. In the process against him, which was not brought to light till several years after the present work was published, one of the charges was that he fled from the field, leaving his soldiers to their fate, and escaping by means of a beam which had survived the demolition of the bridge and still stretched across the chasm from one side to the other. The chief, in his reply, said that, far from deserting his men, they deserted him, and that he did not fly till he was wounded and his horse killed under him, when he escaped across the breach, was taken up behind a mounted cavalier on the other side, and carried out of the fray. That he should not have alluded to the account given of the manner of his escape, so much less glorious than that usually claimed for him, may lead us to infer that it was too true to be disputed. Such is the judgment of Señor Ramirez, who, in his account of the affair, tells us that, far from being an object of admiration, Alvarado's escape was, in his own time, deemed rather worthy of punishment, as an act of desertion which cost the lives of many brave followers whom he left behind him. (See the Proceso de Alvarado, pp. 53, 68, with the caustic remarks of Ramirez, pp. xiv., 288, et seq.) It is natural that a descendant of the conquered race should hold in peculiar detestation the most cruel persecutor of the Aztecs.]

occasional flights of arrows from the lake. The attention of the Aztecs was diverted by the rich spoil that strewed the battle-ground; fortunately for the Spaniards, who, had their enemy pursued with the same ferocity with which he had fought, would, in their crippled condition, have been cut off, probably, to a man. But little molested, therefore, they were allowed to defile through the adjacent village, or suburbs, it might be called, of Popotla.[21]

The Spanish commander there dismounted from his jaded steed, and, sitting down on the steps of an Indian temple, gazed mournfully on the broken files as they passed before him. What a spectacle did they present! The cavalry, most of them dismounted, were mingled with the infantry, who dragged their feeble limbs along with difficulty; their shattered mail and tattered garments dripping with the salt ooze, showing through their rents many a bruise and ghastly wound; their bright arms soiled, their proud crests and banners gone, the baggage, artillery, all, in short, that constitutes the pride and panoply of glorious war, forever lost. Cortés, as he looked wistfully on their thin and disordered ranks, sought in vain for many a familiar face, and missed more than one dear companion who had stood side by side with him through all the perils of the Conquest. Though accustomed to control his emotions, or, at least, to conceal them, the sight was

[21] "Fué Dios servido de que los Mejicanos se ocupasen en recojer los despojos de los muertos, y las riquezas de oro y piedras que llevaba el bagage, y de sacar los muertos de aquel acequia, y á los caballos y otros bestias. Y por esto no siguiéron el alcanze, y los Españoles pudiéron ir poco á poco por su camino sin tener mucha molestia de enemigos." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 25.

too much for him. He covered his face with his hands, and the tears, which trickled down, revealed too plainly the anguish of his soul.[22]

He found some consolation, however, in the sight of several of the cavaliers on whom he most relied. Alvarado, Sandoval, Olid, Ordaz, Avila, were yet safe. He had the inexpressible satisfaction, also, of learning the safety of the Indian interpreter, Marina, so dear to him, and so important to the army. She had been committed, with a daughter of a Tlascalan chief, to several of that nation. She was fortunately placed in the van, and her faithful escort had carried her securely through all the dangers of the night. Aguilar, the other interpreter, had also escaped. And it was with no less satisfaction that Cortés learned the safety of the ship-builder, Martin Lopez.[23] The general's solicitude for the fate of this man, so indispensable, as he proved, to the success of his subsequent operations, showed that, amidst all his affliction, his indomitable spirit was looking forward to the hour of vengeance.

Meanwhile, the advancing column had reached the neighboring city of Tlacopan (Tacuba,) once the capital of an independent principality. There it halted in the great street, as if bewildered and altogether uncertain what course to take; like a herd of panic-struck deer, who, flying from the hunters, with the cry of hound and horn still ringing in their ears, look wildly around for some glen or copse in which to plunge for concealment. Cortés, who had hastily

[22] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 89.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.

[23] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 12.

mounted and rode on to the front again, saw the danger of remaining in a populous place, where the inhabitants might sorely annoy the troops from the *azoteas*, with little risk to themselves. Pushing forward, therefore, he soon led them into the country. There he endeavored to reform his disorganized battalions and bring them to something like order.[24]

Hard by, at no great distance on the left, rose an eminence, looking towards a chain of mountains which fences in the Valley on the west. It was called the Hill of Otoncalpolco, and sometimes the Hill of Montezuma.[25] It was crowned with an Indian *teocalli*, with its large outworks of stone covering an ample space, and by its strong position, which commanded the neighboring plain, promised a good place of refuge for the exhausted troops. But the men, disheartened and stupefied by their late reverses, seemed for the moment incapable of further exertion; and the place was held by a body of armed Indians. Cortés saw the necessity of dislodging them if he would save the remains of his army from entire destruction. The event showed he still held a control over their wills stronger than circumstances themselves. Cheering them on,

[24] "Tacuba," says that interesting traveller, Latrobe, "lies near the foot of the hills, and is at the present day chiefly noted for the large and noble church which was erected there by Cortés. And hard by you trace the lines of a Spanish encampment. I do not hazard the opinion, but it might appear by the coincidence, that this was the very position chosen by Cortés for his intrenchment, after the retreat just mentioned, and before he commenced his painful route towards Otumba." (Rambler in Mexico, Letter 5.) It is evident, from our text, that Cortés could have thrown up no intrenchment here, at least on his retreat from the capital.

[25] Lorenzana, Viage, p. xiii.

and supported by his gallant cavaliers, he succeeded in infusing into the most sluggish something of his own intrepid temper, and led them up the ascent in face of the enemy. But the latter made slight resistance, and, after a few feeble volleys of missiles which did little injury, left the ground to the assailants.

It was covered by a building of considerable size, and furnished ample accommodations for the diminished numbers of the Spaniards. They found there some provisions; and more, it is said, were brought to them, in the course of the day, from some friendly Otomi villages in the neighborhood. There was, also, a quantity of fuel in the courts, destined to the uses of the temple. With this they made fires to dry their drenched garments, and busily employed themselves in dressing one another's wounds, stiff and extremely painful from exposure and long exertion. Thus refreshed, the weary soldiers threw themselves down on the floor and courts of the temple, and soon found the temporary oblivion which Nature seldom denies even in the greatest extremity of suffering.[26]

There was one eye in that assembly, however, which we may well believe did not so speedily close. For what agitating thoughts must have crowded on the mind of their commander, as he beheld his poor remnant of followers thus huddled together in this miserable bivouac! And this was all that survived of the brilliant array with which but a few weeks since he had entered the capital of Mexico! Where now were his dreams of

[26] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 24.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 89.

conquest and empire? And what was he but a luckless adventurer, at whom the finger of scorn would be uplifted as a madman? Whichever way he turned, the horizon was almost equally gloomy, with scarcely one light spot to cheer him. He had still a weary journey before him, through perilous and unknown paths, with guides of whose fidelity he could not be assured. And how could he rely on his reception at Tlascala, the place of his destination,—the land of his ancient enemies, where, formerly as a foe, and now as a friend, he had brought desolation to every family within its borders?

Yet these agitating and gloomy reflections, which might have crushed a common mind, had no power over that of Cortés; or, rather, they only served to renew his energies and quicken his perceptions, as the war of the elements purifies and gives elasticity to the atmosphere. He looked with an unblenching eye on his past reverses; but, confident in his own resources, he saw a light through the gloom which others could not. Even in the shattered relics which lay around him, resembling in their haggard aspect and wild attire a horde of famished outlaws, he discerned the materials out of which to reconstruct his ruined fortunes. In the very hour of discomfiture and general despondency, there is no doubt that his heroic spirit was meditating the plan of operations which he afterwards pursued with such dauntless constancy.

The loss sustained by the Spaniards on this fatal night, like every other event in the history of the Conquest, is reported with the greatest discrepancy. If we believe Cortés' own letter, it did not exceed one

hundred and fifty Spaniards and two thousand Indians. But the general's bulletins, while they do full justice to the difficulties to be overcome and the importance of the results, are less scrupulous in stating the extent either of his means or of his losses. Thoan Cano, one of the cavaliers present, estimates the slain at eleven hundred and seventy Spaniards and eight thousand allies. But this is a greater number than we have allowed for the whole army. Perhaps we may come nearest the truth by taking the computation of Gomara, who was the chaplain of Cortés, and who had free access, doubtless, not only to the general's papers, but to other authentic sources of information. According to him, the number of Christians killed and missing was four hundred and fifty, and that of natives four thousand. This, with the loss sustained in the conflicts of the previous week, may have reduced the former to something more than a third, and the latter to a fourth, or perhaps fifth, of the original force with which they entered the capital.[27] The brunt of the

[27] The table below may give the reader some idea of the discrepancies in numerical estimates, even among eye-witnesses, and writers who, having access to the actors, are nearly of equal authority:

	Killed and Missing.			
Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 145,	150 Spaniards,		2000 Indians.	
Cano, ap. Oviedo, lib. 33, cap. 54,	1170	"	8000	"
Probanza, etc.,	200	"	2000	"
Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., lib. 33, cap. 13,	150	"	2000	"
Camargo,	450	"	4000	"
Gomara, cap. 109,	450	"	4000	"
Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., cap. 88,	450	"	4000	"
Sahagun, lib. 12, cap. 24,	300	"	2000	"
Herrera, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 12,	150	"	4000	"

Bernal Diaz does not take the trouble to agree with himself. After stating that the rear, on which the loss fell heaviest, consisted of 120

action fell on the rear-guard, few of whom escaped. It was formed chiefly of the soldiers of Narvaez, who fell the victims, in some measure, of their cupidity.[88] Forty-six of the cavalry were cut off, which with previous losses reduced the number in this branch of the service to twenty-three, and some of these in very poor condition. The greater part of the treasure, the baggage, the general's papers, including his accounts, and a minute diary of transactions since leaving Cuba,—which, to posterity at least, would have been of more worth than the gold,—had been swallowed up by the waters.[89] The ammunition, the beautiful little train of artillery with which Cortés had entered the city, were

men, he adds, in the same paragraph, that 150 of these were slain, which number swells to 200 in a few lines further! Falstaff's men in buckram! See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Cano's estimate embraces, it is true, those—but their number was comparatively small—who perished subsequently on the march. The same authority states that 270 of the garrison, ignorant of the proposed departure of their countrymen, were perfidiously left in the palace of Axayacatl, where they surrendered on terms, but were subsequently all sacrificed by the Aztecs! (See Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.) The improbability of this monstrous story, by which the army with all its equipage could leave the citadel without the knowledge of so many of their comrades,—and this be permitted, too, at a juncture which made every man's co-operation so important,—is too obvious to require refutation. Herrera records, what is much more probable, that Cortés gave particular orders to the captain, Ojeda, to see that none of the sleeping or wounded should, in the hurry of the moment, be overlooked in their quarters. Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.

[88] "Pues de los de Narvaez, todos los mas en las puentes quedáron, cargados de oro." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

[89] According to Diaz, part of the gold intrusted to the *Tlascalan* convoy was preserved. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 136.) From the document already cited,—Probanza de Villa Segura, MS.,—it appears that it was a Castilian guard who had charge of it.

all gone. Not a musket even remained, the men having thrown them away, eager to disencumber themselves of all that might retard their escape on that disastrous night. Nothing, in short, of their military apparatus was left, but their swords, their crippled cavalry, and a few damaged cross-bows, to assert the superiority of the European over the barbarian.

The prisoners, including, as already noticed, the children of Montezuma and the cacique of Tezcuco, all perished by the hands of their ignorant countrymen, it is said, in the indiscriminate fury of the assault. There were, also, some persons of consideration among the Spaniards whose names were inscribed on the same bloody roll of slaughter. Such was Francisco de Morla, who fell by the side of Cortés on returning with him to the rescue. But the greatest loss was that of Juan Velasquez de Leon, who, with Alvarado, had command of the rear. It was the post of danger on that night, and he fell, bravely defending it, at an early part of the retreat. He was an excellent officer, possessed of many knightly qualities, though somewhat haughty in his bearing, being one of the best-connected cavaliers in the army. The near relation of the governor of Cuba, he looked coldly, at first, on the pretensions of Cortés; but, whether from a conviction that the latter had been wronged, or from personal preference, he afterwards attached himself zealously to his leader's interests. The general requited this with a generous confidence, assigning him, as we have seen, a separate and independent command, where misconduct, or even a mistake, would have been fatal to the expedition. Velasquez proved himself worthy of the trust; and there was no

cavalier in the army, with the exception, perhaps, of Sandoval and Alvarado, whose loss would have been so deeply deplored by the commander. Such were the disastrous results of this terrible passage of the causeway; more disastrous than those occasioned by any other reverse which has stained the Spanish arms in the New World; and which have branded the night on which it happened, in the national annals, with the name of the *noche triste*, "the sad or melancholy night."[30]

[30] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33. cap. 13.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

CHAPTER IV.

RETREAT OF THE SPANIARDS.—DISTRESSES OF THE ARMY. — PYRAMIDS OF TEOTIHUACAN. — GREAT BATTLE OF OTUMBA.

1520.

THE Mexicans, during the day which followed the retreat of the Spaniards, remained, for the most part, quiet in their own capital, where they found occupation in cleansing the streets and causeways from the dead, which lay festering in heaps that might have bred a pestilence. They may have been employed, also, in paying the last honors to such of their warriors as had fallen, solemnizing the funeral rites by the sacrifice of their wretched prisoners, who, as they contemplated their own destiny, may well have envied the fate of their companions who left their bones on the battle-field. It was most fortunate for the Spaniards, in their extremity, that they had this breathing-time allowed them by the enemy. But Cortés knew that he could not calculate on its continuance, and, feeling how important it was to get the start of his vigilant foe, he ordered his troops to be in readiness to resume their march by midnight. Fires were left burning, the better to deceive the enemy; and at the appointed hour the little army, without sound of drum or trumpet, but with renewed spirits, sallied forth from the gates of the *teocalli*, within whose hospitable walls they had

found such seasonable succor. The place is now indicated by a Christian church, dedicated to the Virgin, under the title of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*, whose miraculous image—the very same, *it is said*, brought over by the followers of Cortés[1]—still extends her beneficent sway over the neighboring capital; and the traveller who pauses within the precincts of the consecrated fane may feel that he is standing on the spot made memorable by the refuge it afforded to the Conquerors in the hour of their deepest despondency.[2]

It was arranged that the sick and wounded should occupy the centre, transported on litters, or on the backs of the *tamanes*, while those who were strong enough to keep their seats should mount behind the cavalry. The able-bodied soldiers were ordered to the front and rear, while others protected the flanks, thus affording all the security possible to the invalids.

The retreating army held on its way unmolested under cover of the darkness. But, as morning dawned, they beheld parties of the natives moving over the heights, or hanging at a distance, like a cloud of locusts, on their rear. They did not belong to the capital, but were gathered from the neighboring country, where the tidings of their rout had already pene-

[1] Lorenzana, Viage, p. xiii.

[2] The last instance, I believe, of the direct interposition of the Virgin in behalf of the metropolis was in 1833, when she was brought into the city to avert the cholera. She refused to pass the night in town, however, but was found the next morning in her own sanctuary at Los Remedios, showing, by the mud with which she was plentifully bespattered, that she must have performed the distance—several leagues—through the miry ways on foot! See Latrobe, Rambler in Mexico, Letter 5.

trated. The charm which had hitherto covered the white men was gone. The dread *Teules* were no longer invincible.[3]

The Spaniards, under the conduct of their Tlascalan guides, took a circuitous route to the north, passing through Quauhtitlan, and round lake Tzompanco (Zumpango), thus lengthening their march, but keeping at a distance from the capital. From the eminences, as they passed along, the Indians rolled down heavy stones, mingled with volleys of darts and arrows, on the heads of the soldiers. Some were even bold enough to descend into the plain and assault the extremities of the column. But they were soon beaten off by the horse, and compelled to take refuge among the hills, where the ground was too rough for the rider to follow. Indeed, the Spaniards did not care to do so, their object being rather to fly than to fight.

In this way they slowly advanced, halting at intervals to drive off their assailants when they became too importunate, and greatly distressed by their missiles

3 The epithet by which, according to Diaz, the Castilians were constantly addressed by the natives, and which—whether correctly or not—he interprets into *gods*, or *divine beings*. (See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 48, et alibi.) One of the stanzas of Ercilla intimates the existence of a similar delusion among the South American Indians,—and a similar cure of it:

> "Por dioses, como dixe, eran tenidos
> de los Indios los nuestros; pero oliéron
> que de muger y hombre eran nacidos,
> y todas sus flaquezas entendiéron:
> viéndolos á miserias sometidos,
> el error ignorante conociéron,
> ardiendo en viva rabia avergonzados
> por verse de mortales conquistados."
>
> LA ARAUCANA, Parte 1, Canto 2.

and their desultory attacks. At night, the troops usually found shelter in some town or hamlet, whence the inhabitants, in anticipation of their approach, had been careful to carry off all the provisions. The Spaniards were soon reduced to the greatest straits for subsistence. Their principal food was the wild cherry, which grew in the woods or by the roadside. Fortunate were they if they found a few ears of corn unplucked. More frequently nothing was left but the stalks; and with them, and the like unwholesome fare, they were fain to supply the cravings of appetite. When a horse happened to be killed, it furnished an extraordinary banquet; and Cortés himself records the fact of his having made one of a party who thus sumptuously regaled themselves, devouring the animal even to his hide.[4]

The wretched soldiers, faint with famine and fatigue, were sometimes seen to drop down lifeless on the road. Others loitered behind, unable to keep up with the march, and fell into the hands of the enemy, who followed in the track of the army like a flock of famished

[4] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 147.—Hunger furnished them a sauce, says Oviedo, which made their horse-flesh as relishing as the far-famed sausages of Naples, the delicate kid of Avila, or the savory veal of Saragossa! "Con la carne del caballo tubiéron buen pasto, é se consoláron ó mitigáron en parte su hambre, é se lo comiéron sin dexar cuero, ni otra cosa dél sino los huesos, é las vñas, y el pelo; é aun las tripas no les pareció de menos buen gusto que las sobreasados de Nápoles, ó los gentiles cabritos de Abila, ó las sabrosas Terneras de Zaragosa, segun la estrema necesidad que llevaban; por que despues que de la gran cibdad de Temixtitan havian salido, ninguna otra cosa comiéron sino mahiz tostado, é cocido, é yervas del campo, y desto no tanto quanto quisieran ó ovieran menester." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

vultures, eager to pounce on the dying and the dead. Others, again, who strayed too far, in their eagerness to procure sustenance, shared the same fate. The number of these, at length, and the consciousness of the cruel lot for which they were reserved, compelled Cortés to introduce stricter discipline, and to enforce it by sterner punishments than he had hitherto done,—though too often ineffectually, such was the indifference to danger, under the overwhelming pressure of present calamity.

In their prolonged distresses, the soldiers ceased to set a value on those very things for which they had once been content to hazard life itself. More than one who had brought his golden treasure safe through the perils of the *noche triste* now abandoned it as an intolerable burden; and the rude Indian peasant gleaned up, with wondering delight, the bright fragments of the spoils of the capital.[5]

Through these weary days Cortés displayed his usual serenity and fortitude. He was ever in the post of danger, freely exposing himself in encounters with the enemy; in one of which he received a severe wound in the head that afterwards gave him much trouble.[6] He fared no better than the humblest soldier, and strove, by his own cheerful countenance and counsels, to fortify the courage of those who faltered, assuring them that their sufferings would soon be ended by their

[5] Herrera mentions one soldier who had succeeded in carrying off his gold to the value of 3000 *castellanos* across the causeway, and afterwards flung it away by the advice of Cortés. "The devil take your gold," said the commander bluntly to him, "if it is to cost you your life." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.

[6] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 110.

arrival in the hospitable "land of bread."[7] His faithful officers co-operated with him in these efforts; and the common file, indeed, especially his own veterans, must be allowed, for the most part, to have shown a full measure of the constancy and power of endurance so characteristic of their nation,—justifying the honest boast of an old chronicler, "that there was no people so capable of supporting hunger as the Spaniards, and none of them who were ever more severely tried than the soldiers of Cortés."[8] A similar fortitude was shown by the Tlascalans, trained in a rough school that made them familiar with hardship and privations. Although they sometimes threw themselves on the ground, in the extremity of famine, imploring their gods not to abandon them, they did their duty as warriors, and, far from manifesting coldness towards the Spaniards as the cause of their distresses, seemed only the more firmly knit to them by the sense of a common suffering.

On the seventh morning, the army had reached the mountain rampart which overlooks the plains of Otompan, or Otumba, as commonly called, from the Indian city—now a village—situated in them. The distance from the capital is hardly nine leagues. But the Spaniards had travelled more than thrice that distance, in their circuitous march round the lakes. This had been performed so slowly that it consumed a week, two nights

[7] The meaning of the word *Tlascala*, and so called from the abundance of maize raised in the country. Boturini, Idea, p. 78.

[8] "Empero la Nacion nuestra Española sufre mas hambre que otra ninguna, i estos de Cortés mas que todos." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 110.

of which had been passed in the same quarters, from the absolute necessity of rest. It was not, therefore, till the seventh of July that they reached the heights commanding the plains which stretched far away towards the territory of Tlascala, in full view of the venerable pyramids of Teotihuacan, two of the most remarkable monuments of the antique American civilization now existing north of the Isthmus. During all the preceding day they had seen parties of the enemy hovering like dark clouds above the highlands, brandishing their weapons, and calling out, in vindictive tones, "Hasten on! You will soon find yourselves where you cannot escape!" words of mysterious import, which they were made fully to comprehend on the following morning.[9]

The monuments of San Juan Teotihuacan are, with the exception of the temple of Cholula, the most ancient remains, probably, on the Mexican soil. They were found by the Aztecs, according to their traditions, on their entrance into the country, when Teotihuacan, *the habitation of the gods*, now a paltry village, was a flourishing city, the rival of Tula, the great Toltec capital.[10] The two principal pyramids were dedicated

9 For the foregoing pages, see Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13,—Gomara, Crónica, ubi supra,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 89,—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6,—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 147, 148,—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 25, 26.

10 "Su nombre, que quiere decir *habitacion de los Dioses*, y que ya por estos tiempos era ciudad tan famosa, que no solo competia, pero excedia con muchas ventajas á la corte de Tollan." Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 27.

to *Tonatiuh*, the Sun, and *Meztli*, the Moon. The former, which is considerably the larger, is found by recent measurements to be six hundred and eighty-two feet long at the base, and one hundred and eighty feet high, dimensions not inferior to those of some of the kindred monuments of Egypt.[11] They were divided into four stories, of which three are now discernible, while the vestiges of the intermediate gradations are nearly effaced. In fact, time has dealt so roughly with them, and the materials have been so much displaced by the treacherous vegetation of the tropics, muffling up with its flowery mantle the ruin which it causes, that it is not easy to discern at once the pyramidal form of the structures.[12] The huge masses bear such resemblance to the North American mounds that some have fancied them to be only natural eminences shaped by the hand of man into a regular form, and ornamented with the temples and terraces the wreck of which still covers their slopes. But others, seeing no example of a similar elevation in the wide plain in which they

[11] The pyramid of Mycerinos is 280 feet only at the base, and 162 feet in height. The great pyramid of Cheops is 728 feet at the base, and 448 feet high. See Denon, Egypt Illustrated (London, 1825), p. 9.

[12] "It requires a particular position," says Mr. Tudor, "united with some little faith, to discover the pyramidal form at all." (Tour in North America, vol. ii. p. 277.) Yet Mr. Bullock says, "The general figure of the square is as perfect as the great pyramid of Egypt." (Six Months in Mexico, vol. ii. chap. 26.) Eye-witnesses both! The historian must often content himself with repeating, in the words of the old French lay,—

> "*Si com je l'ai trové escrite,*
> Vos conterai la vérité."

stand, infer, with more probability, that they are wholly of an artificial construction.[13]

The interior is composed of clay mixed with pebbles, incrusted on the surface with the light porous stone, *tetzontli*, so abundant in the neighboring quarries. Over this was a thick coating of stucco, resembling, in its reddish color, that found in the ruins of Palenque. According to tradition, the pyramids are hollow; but hitherto the attempt to discover the cavity in that dedicated to the Sun has been unsuccessful. In the smaller mound an aperture has been found on the southern side, at two-thirds of the elevation. It is formed by a narrow gallery, which, after penetrating to the distance of several yards, terminates in two pits or wells. The largest of these is about fifteen feet deep,[14] and the sides are faced with unbaked bricks; but to what purpose it was devoted, nothing is left to show. It may have been to hold the ashes of some powerful chief, like the solitary apartment discovered in the great Egyptian pyramid. That these monuments were dedicated to religious uses, there is no doubt; and it would be only conformable to the practice of antiquity in the Eastern continent that they should have served for tombs as well as temples.[15]

[13] This is M. de Humboldt's opinion. (See his Essai politique, tom. ii. pp. 66–70.) He has also discussed these interesting monuments in his Vues des Cordillères, p. 25, et seq.

[14] Latrobe gives the description of this cavity, into which he and his fellow-travellers penetrated. Rambler in Mexico, Letter 7.

[15] "Et tot templa deûm Romæ, quot in urbe sepulcra
Heroum numerare licet: quos fabula manes
No'ilitat, noster populus veneratus adorat."
PRUDENTIUS, Contra Sym., lib. 1.

Distinct traces of the latter destination are said to be visible on the summit of the smaller pyramid, consisting of the remains of stone walls showing a building of considerable size and strength.[16] There are no remains on the top of the pyramid of the Sun. But the traveller who will take the trouble to ascend its bald summit will be amply compensated by the glorious view it will open to him;—towards the southeast, the hills of Tlascala, surrounded by their green plantations and cultivated corn-fields, in the midst of which stands the little village, once the proud capital of the republic. Somewhat farther to the south, the eye passes across the beautiful plains lying around the city of Puebla de los Angeles, founded by the old Spaniards, and still rivalling, in the splendor of its churches, the most brilliant capitals of Europe; and far in the west he may behold the Valley of Mexico, spread out like a map, with its diminished lakes, its princely capital rising in still greater glory from its ruins, and its rugged hills gathering darkly around it, as in the days of Montezuma.

The summit of this larger mound is said to have been crowned by a temple, in which was a colossal statue of its presiding deity, the Sun, made of one entire block of stone, and facing the east. Its breast was protected by a plate of burnished gold and silver, on which the first rays of the rising luminary rested.[17]

[16] The dimensions are given by Bullock (Six Months in Mexico, vol. ii. chap. 26), who has sometimes seen what has eluded the optics of other travellers.

[17] Such is the account given by the cavalier Boturini. Idea, pp. 42, 43.

An antiquary, in the early part of the last century, speaks of having seen some fragments of the statue. It was still standing, according to report, on the invasion of the Spaniards, and was demolished by the indefatigable Bishop Zumárraga, whose hand fell more heavily than that of Time itself on the Aztec monuments.[18]

Around the principal pyramids are a great number of smaller ones, rarely exceeding thirty feet in height, which, according to tradition, were dedicated to the stars and served as sepulchres for the great men of the nation. They are arranged symmetrically in avenues terminating at the sides of the great pyramids, which face the cardinal points. The plain on which they stand was called *Micoatl*, or "Path of the Dead." The laborer, as he turns up the ground, still finds there numerous arrow-heads, and blades of obsidian, attesting the warlike character of its primitive population.[19]

What thoughts must crowd on the mind of the traveller as he wanders amidst these memorials of the past; as he treads over the ashes of the generations who reared these colossal fabrics, which take us from the present into the very depths of time! But who were their builders? Was it the shadowy Olmecs, whose history, like that of the ancient Titans, is lost in the mists of

[18] Both Ixtlilxochitl and Boturini, who visited these monuments, one early in the seventeenth, the other in the first part of the eighteenth century, testify to their having seen the remains of this statue. They had entirely disappeared by 1757, when Veytia examined the pyramid. Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 26.

[19] "Agricola, incurvo terram molitus aratro,
Exesa inveniet scabra rubigine pila," etc.
GEORG., lib. i.

fable? or, as commonly reported, the peaceful and industrious Toltecs, of whom all that we can glean rests on traditions hardly more secure? What has become of the races who built them? Did they remain on the soil, and mingle and become incorporated with the fierce Aztecs who succeeded them? Or did they pass on to the South, and find a wider field for the expansion of their civilization, as shown by the higher character of the architectural remains in the distant regions of Central America and Yucatan? It is all a mystery,—over which time has thrown an impenetrable veil, that no mortal hand may raise. A nation has passed away,—powerful, populous, and well advanced in refinement, as attested by their monuments,—but it has perished without a name. It has died and made no sign!

Such speculations, however, do not seem to have disturbed the minds of the Conquerors, who have not left a single line respecting these time-honored structures, though they passed in full view of them,—perhaps under their very shadows. In the sufferings of the present they had little leisure to bestow on the past. Indeed, the new and perilous position in which at this very spot they found themselves must naturally have excluded every other thought from their bosoms but that of self-preservation.

As the army was climbing the mountain steeps which shut in the Valley of Otompan, the vedettes came in with the intelligence that a powerful body was encamped on the other side, apparently awaiting their approach. The intelligence was soon confirmed by their own eyes, as they turned the crest of the sierra, and saw

spread out, below, a mighty host, filling up the whole depth of the valley, and giving to it the appearance, from the white cotton mail of the warriors, of being covered with snow.[20] It consisted of levies from the surrounding country, and especially the populous territory of Tezcuco, drawn together at the instance of Cuitlahua, Montezuma's successor, and now concentrated on this point to dispute the passage of the Spaniards. Every chief of note had taken the field with his whole array gathered under his standard, proudly displaying all the pomp and rude splendor of his military equipment. As far as the eye could reach, were to be seen shields and waving banners, fantastic helmets, forests of shining spears, the bright feather-mail of the chief, and the coarse cotton panoply of his follower, all mingled together in wild confusion and tossing to and fro like the billows of a troubled ocean.[21] It was a sight to fill the stoutest heart among the Christians with dismay, heightened by the previous expectation of soon reaching the friendly land which was to terminate their wearisome pilgrimage. Even Cortés, as he contrasted the tremendous array before him with his own diminished squadrons, wasted by disease and enfeebled by hunger and fatigue, could not escape the conviction that his last hour had arrived.[22]

[20] "Y como iban vestidos de blanco, parecia el campo nevado." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.

[21] "Vistosa confusion," says Solís, "de armas y penachos, en que tenian su hermosura los horrores." (Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 20.) His painting shows the hand of a great artist,—which he certainly was. But he should not have put fire-arms into the hands of his countrymen on this occasion.

[22] "Y cierto creímos ser aquel el último de nuestros dias." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 148.

But his was not the heart to despond; and he gathered strength from the very extremity of his situation. He had no room for hesitation; for there was no alternative left to him. To escape was impossible. He could not retreat on the capital, from which he had been expelled. He must advance,—cut through the enemy, or perish. He hastily made his dispositions for the fight. He gave his force as broad a front as possible, protecting it on each flank by his little body of horse, now reduced to twenty. Fortunately, he had not allowed the invalids, for the last two days, to mount behind the riders, from a desire to spare the horses, so that these were now in tolerable condition; and, indeed, the whole army had been refreshed by halting, as we have seen, two nights and a day in the same place, a delay, however, which had allowed the enemy time to assemble in such force to dispute its progress.

Cortés instructed his cavaliers not to part with their lances, and to direct them at the face. The infantry were to thrust, not strike, with their swords; passing them at once through the bodies of their enemies. They were, above all, to aim at the leaders, as the general well knew how much depends on the life of the commander in the wars of barbarians, whose want of subordination makes them impatient of any control but that to which they are accustomed.

He then addressed to his troops a few words of encouragement, as customary with him on the eve of an engagement. He reminded them of the victories they had won with odds nearly as discouraging as the present; thus establishing the superiority of science and

discipline over numbers. Numbers, indeed, were of no account, where the arm of the Almighty was on their side. And he bade them have full confidence that He who had carried them safely through so many perils would not now abandon them and his own good cause to perish by the hand of the infidel. His address was brief, for he read in their looks that settled resolve which rendered words unnecessary. The circumstances of their position spoke more forcibly to the heart of every soldier than any eloquence could have done, filling it with that feeling of desperation which makes the weak arm strong and turns the coward into a hero. After they had earnestly commended themselves, therefore, to the protection of God, the Virgin, and St. James, Cortés led his battalions straight against the enemy.[23]

It was a solemn moment, that in which the devoted little band, with steadfast countenances and their usual intrepid step, descended on the plain, to be swallowed up, as it were, in the vast ocean of their enemies. The latter rushed on with impetuosity to meet them, making the mountains ring to their discordant yells and battle-cries, and sending forth volleys of stones and arrows which for a moment shut out the light of day. But, when the leading files of the two armies closed, the superiority of the Christians was felt, as their antago-

[23] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 14.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27.—Cortés might have addressed his troops, as Napoleon did his in the famous battle with the Mamelukes: "From yonder pyramids forty centuries look down upon you." But the situation of the Spaniards was altogether too serious for theatrical display.

nists, falling back before the charges of cavalry, were thrown into confusion by their own numbers who pressed on them from behind. The Spanish infantry followed up the blow, and a wide lane was opened in the ranks of the enemy, who, receding on all sides, seemed willing to allow a free passage for their opponents. But it was to return on them with accumulated force, as rallying they poured upon the Christians, enveloping the little army on all sides, which, with its bristling array of long swords and javelins, stood firm, —in the words of a contemporary,—like an islet against which the breakers, roaring and surging, spend their fury in vain.[24] The struggle was desperate of man against man. The Tlascalan seemed to renew his strength, as he fought almost in view of his own native hills; as did the Spaniard, with the horrible doom of the captive before his eyes. Well did the cavaliers do their duty on that day; charging, in little bodies of four or five abreast, deep into the enemy's ranks, riding over the broken files, and by this temporary advantage giving strength and courage to the infantry. Not a lance was there which did not reek with the blood of the infidel. Among the rest, the young captain Sandoval is particularly commemorated for his daring prowess. Managing his fiery steed with easy horsemanship, he darted, when least expected, into the thickest of the *mêlée*, overturning the stanchest war-

[24] It is Sahagun's simile: "Estaban los Españoles como una Isleta en el mar, combatida de las olas por todas partes." (Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27.) The venerable missionary gathered the particulars of the action, as he informs us, from several who were present in it.

riors, and rejoicing in danger, as if it were his natural element.[25]

But these gallant displays of heroism served only to ingulf the Spaniards deeper and deeper in the mass of the enemy, with scarcely any more chance of cutting their way through his dense and interminable battalions than of hewing a passage with their swords through the mountains. Many of the Tlascalans and some of the Spaniards had fallen, and not one but had been wounded. Cortés himself had received a second cut on the head, and his horse was so much injured that he was compelled to dismount, and take one from the baggage train, a strong-boned animal, who carried him well through the turmoil of the day.[26] The contest had now lasted several hours. The sun rode high in the heavens, and shed an intolerable fervor over the plain. The Christians, weakened by previous sufferings, and faint with loss of blood, began to relax in their desperate exertions. Their enemies, constantly supported by fresh relays from the rear, were still in

[25] The epic bard Ercilla's spirited portrait of the young warrior Tucapél may be applied without violence to Sandoval, as described by the Castilian chroniclers:

"Cubierto Tucapél de fina malla
saltó como un ligero y suelto pardo
en medio de la tímida canalla,
haciendo plaza el bárbaro gallardo:
con silvos grita en desigual batalla:
con piedra, palo, flecha, lanza y dardo
le persigue la gente de manera
como si fuera toro, ó brava fiera."
LA ARAUCANA, Parte 1, canto 8.

[26] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—"Este caballo harriero," says Camargo, "le sirvió en la conquista de Méjico, y en la última guerra que se dió se le matáron." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

good heart, and, quick to perceive their advantage, pressed with redoubled force on the Spaniards. The horse fell back, crowded on the foot; and the latter, in vain seeking a passage amidst the dusky throngs of the enemy, who now closed up the rear, were thrown into some disorder. The tide of battle was setting rapidly against the Christians. The fate of the day would soon be decided; and all that now remained for them seemed to be to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

At this critical moment, Cortés, whose restless eye had been roving round the field in quest of any object that might offer him the means of arresting the coming ruin, rising in his stirrups, descried at a distance, in the midst of the throng, the chief who from his dress and military cortége he knew must be the commander of the barbarian forces. He was covered with a rich surcoat of feather-work; and a panache of beautiful plumes, gorgeously set in gold and precious stones, floated above his head. Rising above this, and attached to his back, between the shoulders, was a short staff bearing a golden net for a banner,—the singular, but customary, symbol of authority for an Aztec commander. The cacique, whose name was Cihuaca, was borne on a litter, and a body of young warriors, whose gay and ornamented dresses showed them to be the flower of the Indian nobles, stood round as a guard of his person and the sacred emblem.

The eagle eye of Cortés no sooner fell on this personage than it lighted up with triumph. Turning quickly round to the cavaliers at his side, among whom were Sandoval, Olid, Alvarado, and Avila, he pointed

out the chief, exclaiming, "There is our mark! Follow and support me!" Then, crying his war-cry, and striking his iron heel into his weary steed, he plunged headlong into the thickest of the press. His enemies fell back, taken by surprise and daunted by the ferocity of the attack. Those who did not were pierced through with his lance or borne down by the weight of his charger. The cavaliers followed close in the rear. On they swept with the fury of a thunderbolt, cleaving the solid ranks asunder, strewing their path with the dying and the dead, and bounding over every obstacle in their way. In a few minutes they were in the presence of the Indian commander, and Cortés, overturning his supporters, sprang forward with the strength of a lion, and, striking him through with his lance, hurled him to the ground. A young cavalier, Juan de Salamanca, who had kept close by his general's side, quickly dismounted and despatched the fallen chief. Then, tearing away his banner, he presented it to Cortés, as a trophy to which he had the best claim.[87] It was all the work of a moment. The guard, overpowered by the suddenness of the onset, made little resistance, but, flying, communicated their own panic to their comrades. The tidings of the loss soon spread over the field. The Indians, filled with consternation, now thought only of escape. In their blind terror, their numbers augmented their confusion. They tram

[87] The brave cavalier was afterwards permitted by the emperor Charles V. to assume this trophy on his own escutcheon, in commemoration of his exploit. Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

pled on one another, fancying it was the enemy in their rear.[28]

The Spaniards and Tlascalans were not slow to avail themselves of the marvellous change in their affairs. Their fatigue, their wounds, hunger, thirst, all were forgotten in the eagerness for vengeance; and they followed up the flying foe, dealing death at every stroke, and taking ample retribution for all they had suffered in the bloody marshes of Mexico.[29] Long did they pursue, till, the enemy having abandoned the field, they returned, sated with slaughter, to glean the booty which he had left. It was great, for the ground was covered with the bodies of chiefs, at whom the Spaniards, in obedience to the general's instructions, had particularly aimed; and their dresses displayed all the

[28] The historians all concur in celebrating this glorious achievement of Cortés; who, concludes Gomara, "by his single arm saved the whole army from destruction." See Crónica, cap. 110.—Also Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 89.—The brief and extremely modest notice of the affair in the general's own letter forms a beautiful contrast to the style of panegyric by others: "In this arduous contest we consumed a great part of the day, until it pleased God that a person was slain in their ranks of such consequence that his death put an end to the battle." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 148.

[29] "Pues á nosotros," says the doughty Captain Diaz, "no nos dolian las heridas, ni teniamos hambre, ni sed, sino que parecia que no auiamos auido, ni passado ningun mal trabajo. Seguímos la vitoria matando, é hiriendo. Pues nuestros amigos los de Tlascala estavan hechos vnos leones, y con sus espadas, y montantes, y otras armas que allí apañáron, hazianlo muy biẽ y esforçadamente." Hist. de la Conquista, loc. cit.

barbaric pomp of ornament in which the Indian warrior delighted.[30] When his men had thus indemnified themselves, in some degree, for their late reverses, Cortés called them again under their banners; and, after offering up a grateful acknowledgment to the Lord of Hosts for their miraculous preservation,[31] they renewed their march across the now deserted valley. The sun was declining in the heavens, but, before the shades of evening had gathered around, they reached an Indian temple on an eminence, which afforded a strong and commodious position for the night.

Such was the famous battle of Otompan,—or Otumba, as commonly called, from the Spanish corruption of the name. It was fought on the eighth of July, 1520. The whole amount of the Indian force is reckoned by Castilian writers at two hundred thousand! that of the slain at twenty thousand! Those who admit the first part of the estimate will find no difficulty in receiving the last.[32] It is about as difficult to form an accurate calculation of the numbers of a disorderly savage mul-

[30] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

[31] The belligerent apostle St. James, riding, as usual, his milk-white courser, came to the rescue on this occasion; an event commemorated by the dedication of a hermitage to him, in the neighborhood. (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala.) Diaz, a skeptic on former occasions, admits his indubitable appearance on this. (Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.) According to the Tezcucan chronicler, he was supported by the Virgin and St. Peter. (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 89.) Voltaire sensibly remarks, "Ceux qui ont fait les relations de ces étranges événemens les ont voulu relever par des miracles, qui ne servent en effet qu'à les rabaisser. Le vrai miracle fut la conduite de Cortés." Voltaire, Essai sur les Mœurs, chap. 147.

[32] See Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 110.

titude as of the pebbles on the beach or the scattered leaves in autumn. Yet it was, undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable victories ever achieved in the New World. And this, not merely on account of the disparity of the forces, but of their unequal condition. For the Indians were in all their strength, while the Christians were wasted by disease, famine, and long-protracted sufferings; without cannon or fire-arms, and deficient in the military apparatus which had so often struck terror into their barbarian foe,—deficient even in the terrors of a victorious name. But they had discipline on their side, desperate resolve, and implicit confidence in their commander. That they should have triumphed against such odds furnishes an inference of the same kind as that established by the victories of the European over the semi-civilized hordes of Asia.

Yet even here all must not be referred to superior discipline and tactics. For the battle would certainly have been lost had it not been for the fortunate death of the Indian general. And, although the selection of the victim may be called the result of calculation, yet it was by the most precarious chance that he was thrown in the way of the Spaniards. It is, indeed, one among many examples of the influence of fortune in determining the fate of military operations. The star of Cortés was in the ascendant. Had it been otherwise, not a Spaniard would have survived that day to tell the bloody tale of the battle of Otumba.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL IN TLASCALA. — FRIENDLY RECEPTION. — DISCONTENTS OF THE ARMY. — JEALOUSY OF THE TLASCALANS. — EMBASSY FROM MEXICO.

1520.

On the following morning the army broke up its encampment at an early hour. The enemy does not seem to have made an attempt to rally. Clouds of skirmishers, however, were seen during the morning, keeping at a respectful distance, though occasionally venturing near enough to salute the Spaniards with a volley of missiles.

On a rising ground they discovered a fountain, a blessing not too often met with in these arid regions, and gratefully commemorated by the Christians for the refreshment it afforded by its cool and abundant waters.[1] A little farther on they descried the rude works which served as the bulwark and boundary of the Tlascalan territory. At the sight, the allies sent up a joyous shout of congratulation, in which the Spaniards heartily

[1] Is it not the same fountain of which Toribio makes honorable mention in his topographical account of the country? "Nace en Tlaxcala una fuente grande á la parte del Norte, cinco leguas de la principal ciudad; nace en un pueblo que se llama Azumba, que en su lengua quiere decir *cabeza*, y así es, porque esta fuente es cabeza y principio del mayor rio de los que entran en la mar del Sur, el cual entra en la mar por Zacatula." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 16.

joined, as they felt they were soon to be on friendly and hospitable ground.

But these feelings were speedily followed by others of a different nature; and, as they drew nearer the territory, their minds were disturbed with the most painful apprehensions as to their reception by the people among whom they were bringing desolation and mourning, and who might so easily, if ill disposed, take advantage of their present crippled condition. "Thoughts like these," says Cortés, "weighed as heavily on my spirit as any which I ever experienced in going to battle with the Aztecs."[2] Still he put, as usual, a good face on the matter, and encouraged his men to confide in their allies, whose past conduct had afforded every ground for trusting to their fidelity in future. He cautioned them, however, as their own strength was so much impaired, to be most careful to give no umbrage or ground for jealousy to their high-spirited allies. "Be but on your guard," continued the intrepid general, "and we have still stout hearts and strong hands to carry us through the midst of them!"[3] With these anxious surmises, bidding adieu to the Aztec domain, the Christian army crossed the frontier, and once more trod the soil of the Republic.

The first place at which they halted was the town of

[2] "El qual pensamiento, y sospecha nos puso en tanta afliccion, quanta trahiamos viniendo peleando con los de Culúa." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 149.

[3] "Y mas dixo, que tenia esperança en Dios que los hallariamos buenos, y leales; é que si otra cosa fuesse, lo que Dios no permita, que nos han de tornar á andar los puños con coraçones fuertes, y braços vigorosos, y que para essc fuessemos muy apercibidos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

Huejotlipan, a place of about twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants.[4] They were kindly greeted by the people, who came out to receive them, inviting the troops to their habitations, and administering all the relief of their simple hospitality. Yet this was not so disinterested, according to some of the Spaniards, as to prevent their expecting in requital a share of the plunder taken in the late action.[5] Here the weary forces remained two or three days, when, the news of their arrival having reached the capital, not more than four or five leagues distant, the old chief Maxixca, their efficient friend on their former visit, and Xicotencatl, the young warrior who, it will be remembered, had commanded the troops of his nation in their bloody encounters with the Spaniards, came with a numerous concourse of the citizens to welcome the fugitives to Tlascala. Maxixca, cordially embracing the Spanish commander, testified the deepest sympathy for his misfortunes. That the white men could so long have withstood the confederated power of the Aztecs was proof enough of their marvellous prowess. "We have made common cause together," said the lord of Tlascala, "and we have common injuries to avenge; and, come weal or come woe, be assured we will prove true and loyal friends and stand by you to the death."[6]

[4] Called Gualipan by Cortés. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 149.) An Aztec would have found it hard to trace the route of his enemies by their itineraries.

[5] Ibid., ubi supra.—Thoan Cano, however, one of the army, denies this, and asserts that the natives received them like their children, and would take no recompense. (See Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.)

[6] "Y que tubiesse por cierto, que me serian muy ciertos, y verdaderos Amigos, hasta la muerte." Ibid., p. 150.

This cordial assurance and sympathy, from one who exercised a control over the public counsels beyond any other ruler, effectually dispelled the doubts that lingered in the mind of Cortés. He readily accepted his invitation to continue his march at once to the capital, where he would find so much better accommodations for his army than in a small town on the frontier. The sick and wounded, placed in hammocks, were borne on the shoulders of the friendly natives; and, as the troops drew near the city, the inhabitants came flocking out in crowds to meet them, rending the air with joyous acclamations and wild bursts of their rude Indian minstrelsy. Amidst the general jubilee, however, were heard sounds of wailing and sad lament, as some unhappy relative or friend, looking earnestly into the diminished files of their countrymen, sought in vain for some dear and familiar countenance, and, as they turned disappointed away, gave utterance to their sorrow in tones that touched the heart of every soldier in the army. With these mingled accompaniments of joy and woe,—the motley web of human life,—the way-worn columns of Cortés at length re-entered the republican capital.[7]

The general and his suite were lodged in the rude

[7] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—"Sobreviniéron las mugeres Tlascaltecas, y todas puestas de luto, y llorando á donde estaban los Españoles, las unas preguntaban por sus maridos, las otras por sus hijos y hermanos, las otras por sus parientes que habian ido con los Españoles, y quedaban todos allá muertos: no es menos, sino que de esto llanto causó gran sentimiento en el corazon del Capitan, y de todos los Españoles, y él procuró lo mejor que pudo consolarles por medio de sus Intérpretes." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 28.

but spacious palace of Maxixca. The rest of the army took up their quarters in the district over which the Tlascalan lord presided. Here they continued several weeks, until, by the attentions of the hospitable citizens, and such medical treatment as their humble science could supply, the wounds of the soldiers were healed, and they recovered from the debility to which they had been reduced by their long and unparalleled sufferings. Cortés was one of those who suffered severely. He lost the use of two of the fingers of his left hand.[8] He had received, besides, two injuries on the head; one of which was so much exasperated by his subsequent fatigues and excitement of mind that it assumed an alarming appearance. A part of the bone was obliged to be removed.[9] A fever ensued, and for several days the hero who had braved danger and death in their most terrible forms lay stretched on his bed, as helpless as an infant. His excellent constitution, however, got the better of disease, and he was at length once more enabled to resume his customary activity. The Spaniards, with politic generosity, requited the hospitality of their hosts by sharing with

[8] "Yo assimismo quedé manco de dos dedos de la mano izquierda" —is Cortés' own expression in his letter to the emperor. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 152.) Don Thoan Cano, however, whose sympathies—from his Indian alliance, perhaps—seem to have been quite as much with the Aztecs as with his own countrymen, assured Oviedo, who was lamenting the general's loss, that he might spare his regrets, since Cortés had as many fingers on his hand at that hour as when he came from Castile. (See Appendix, Part 2, No. 11.) May not the word *manco*, in his letter, be rendered by "maimed"?

[9] "Hiriéron á Cortés con Honda tan mal, que se le pasmó la Cabeça, ó porque no le curáron bien, sacándole Cascos, ó por el demasiado trabajo que pasó." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 110.

them the spoils of their recent victory, and Cortés especially rejoiced the heart of Maxixca by presenting him with the military trophy which he had won from the Indian commander.[10]

But while the Spaniards were thus recruiting their health and spirits under the friendly treatment of their allies, and recovering the confidence and tranquillity of mind which had sunk under their hard reverses, they received tidings, from time to time, which showed that their late disaster had not been confined to the Mexican capital. On his descent from Mexico to encounter Narvaez, Cortés had brought with him a quantity of gold, which he left for safe keeping at Tlascala. To this was added a considerable sum collected by the unfortunate Velasquez de Leon in his expedition to the coast, as well as contributions from other sources. From the unquiet state of the capital, the general thought it best, on his return there, still to leave the treasure under the care of a number of invalid soldiers, who, when in marching condition, were to rejoin him in Mexico. A party from Vera Cruz, consisting of five horsemen and forty foot, had since arrived at Tlascala, and, taking charge of the invalids and treasure, undertook to escort them to the capital. He now learned that they had been intercepted on the route and all cut off, with the entire loss of the treasure. Twelve other soldiers, marching in the same direction, had been massacred in the neighboring province of Tepeaca; and accounts continually arrived of some unfortunate Castilian, who, presuming on the respect

[10] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

hitherto shown to his countrymen, and ignorant of the disasters in the capital, had fallen a victim to the fury of the enemy.[11]

These dismal tidings filled the mind of Cortés with gloomy apprehensions for the fate of the settlement at Villa Rica,—the last stay of their hopes. He despatched a trusty messenger, at once, to that place, and had the inexpressible satisfaction to receive a letter in return from the commander of the garrison, acquainting him with the safety of the colony and its friendly relations with the neighboring Totonacs. It was the best guarantee of the fidelity of the latter, that they had offended the Mexicans too deeply to be forgiven.

While the affairs of Cortés wore so gloomy an aspect without, he had to experience an annoyance scarcely less serious from the discontents of his followers. Many of them had fancied that their late appalling reverses would put an end to the expedition, or, at least, postpone all thoughts of resuming it for the present. But they knew little of Cortés who reasoned thus. Even while tossing on his bed of sickness, he was ripening in his mind fresh schemes for retrieving his honor, and for recovering the empire which had been lost more by another's rashness than his own. This was apparent, as he became convalescent, from the new regulations he made respecting the army, as

[11] Rel. Seg de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 150.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15.—Herrera gives the following inscription, cut on the bark of a tree by some of these unfortunate Spaniards: "By this road passed Juan Juste and his wretched companions, who were so much pinched by hunger that they were obliged to give a solid bar of gold, weighing eight hundred ducats, for a few cakes of maize bread." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.

well as from the orders sent to Vera Cruz for fresh reinforcements.

The knowledge of all this occasioned much disquietude to the disaffected soldiers. They were, for the most part, the ancient followers of Narvaez, on whom, as we have seen, the brunt of the war had fallen the heaviest. Many of them possessed property in the Islands, and had embarked on this expedition chiefly from the desire of increasing it. But they had gathered neither gold nor glory in Mexico. Their present service filled them only with disgust; and the few, comparatively, who had been so fortunate as to survive, languished to return to their rich mines and pleasant farms in Cuba, bitterly cursing the day when they had left them.

Finding their complaints little heeded by the general, they prepared a written remonstrance, in which they made their demand more formally. They represented the rashness of persisting in the enterprise in his present impoverished state, without arms or ammunition, almost without men; and this, too, against a powerful enemy, who had been more than a match for him with all the strength of his late resources. It was madness to think of it. The attempt would bring them all to the sacrifice-block. Their only course was to continue their march to Vera Cruz. Every hour of delay might be fatal. The garrison in that place might be overwhelmed from want of strength to defend itself; and thus their last hope would be annihilated. But, once there, they might wait in comparative security for such reinforcements as would join them from abroad; while in case of failure they could the more easily make their escape.

They concluded with insisting on being permitted to return at once to the port of Villa Rica. This petition, or rather remonstrance, was signed by all the disaffected soldiers, and, after being formally attested by the royal notary, was presented to Cortés.[12]

It was a trying circumstance for him. What touched him most nearly was to find the name of his friend the secretary Duero, to whose good offices he had chiefly owed his command, at the head of the paper. He was not, however, to be shaken from his purpose for a moment; and, while all outward resources seemed to be fading away, and his own friends faltered, or failed him, he was still true to himself. He knew that to retreat to Vera Cruz would be to abandon the enterprise. Once there, his army would soon find a pretext and a way for breaking up and returning to the Islands. All his ambitious schemes would be blasted. The great prize, already once in his grasp, would then be lost forever. He would be a ruined man.

In his celebrated letter to Charles the Fifth, he says that, in reflecting on his position, he felt the truth of the old adage, "that fortune favors the brave. The Spaniards were the followers of the Cross; and, trusting in the infinite goodness and mercy of God, he could not believe that He would suffer them and his own good cause thus to perish among the heathen.[13]

[12] One is reminded of the similar remonstrance made by Alexander's soldiers to him on reaching the Hystaspis,—but attended with more success; as, indeed, was reasonable. For Alexander continued to advance from the ambition of indefinite conquest, while Cortés was only bent on carrying out his original enterprise. What was madness in the one was heroism in the other.

[13] "Acordándome, que siempre á los osados ayuda la fortuna, y

He was resolved, therefore, not to descend to the coast, but at all hazards to retrace his steps and beard the enemy again in his capital."

It was in the same resolute tone that he answered his discontented followers.[14] He urged every argument which could touch their pride or honor as cavaliers. He appealed to that ancient Castilian valor which had never been known to falter before an enemy; besough them not to discredit the great deeds which had made their name ring throughout Europe; not to leave the emprise half achieved, for others more daring and adventurous to finish. How could they with any honor, he asked, desert their allies whom they had involved in the war, and leave them unprotected to the vengeance of the Aztecs? To retreat but a single step towards Villa Rica would be to proclaim their own weakness. It would dishearten their friends and give confidence to their foes. He implored them to resume the confidence in him which they had ever showed, and to reflect that, if they had recently met with reverses, he had up to that point accomplished all, and more than all, that he had promised. It would be easy now to retrieve their losses, if they would have patience and abide in this friendly land until the

que eramos Christianos y confiando en la grandíssima Bondad, y Misericordia de Dios, que no permitiria, que del todo pereciessemos, y se perdiesse tanta, y tan noble Tierra." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 152.

[14] This reply, exclaims Oviedo, showed a man of unconquerable spirit and high destinies: "Paréceme que la respuesta que á esto les dió Hernando Cortés, é lo que hizo en ello, fué vna cosa de ánimo invencible, é de varon de mucha suerte é valor." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15.

reinforcements, which would be ready to come in at his call, should enable them to act on the offensive. If, however, there were any so insensible to the motives which touch a brave man's heart, as to prefer ease at home to the glory of this great achievement, he would not stand in their way. Let them go, in God's name. Let them leave their general in his extremity. He should feel stronger in the service of a few brave spirits than if surrounded by a host of the false or the faint-hearted.[15]

The disaffected party, as already noticed, was chiefly drawn from the troops of Narvaez. When the general's own veterans heard this appeal,[16] their blood warmed with indignation at the thoughts of abandoning him or the cause at such a crisis. They pledged themselves to stand by him to the last; and the malecontents, silenced, if not convinced, by this generous expression of sentiment from their comrades, consented to postpone their departure for the present, under the assurance that no obstacle would be thrown in their way when a more favorable season should present itself.[17]

[15] "É no me hable ninguno en otra cosa; y él que desta opinion no estubiere váyase en buen hora, que mas holgaré de quedar con los pocos y osados, que en compañía de muchos, ni de ninguno cobarde, ni desacordado de su propia honra." Hist. de las Ind., MS., loc. cit.

[16] Oviedo has expanded the harangue of Cortés into several pages, in the course of which the orator quotes Xenophon, and borrows largely from the old Jewish history, a style of eloquence savoring much more of the closet than the camp. Cortés was no pedant, and his soldiers were no scholars.

[17] For the account of this turbulent transaction, see Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 129,—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 152,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 112, 113,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap.

Scarcely was this difficulty adjusted, when Cortés was menaced with one more serious, in the jealousy springing up between his soldiers and their Indian allies. Notwithstanding the demonstrations of regard by Maxixca and his immediate followers, there were others of the nation who looked with an evil eye on their guests, for the calamities in which they had involved them; and they tauntingly asked if, in addition to this, they were now to be burdened by the presence and maintenance of the strangers. These sallies of discontent were not so secret as altogether to escape the ears of the Spaniards, in whom they occasioned no little disquietude. They proceeded for the most part, it is true, from persons of little consideration, since the four great chiefs of the republic appear to have been steadily secured to the interests of Cortés. But they derived some importance from the countenance of the warlike Xicotencatl, in whose bosom still lingered the embers of that implacable hostility which he had displayed so courageously on the field of battle; and sparkles of this fiery temper occasionally gleamed forth in the intimate intercourse into which he was now reluctantly brought with his ancient opponents.

Cortés, who saw with alarm the growing feeling of estrangement which must sap the very foundations on which he was to rest the lever for future operations, employed every argument which suggested itself, to restore the confidence of his own men. He reminded

14.—Diaz is exceedingly wroth with the chaplain Gomara for not discriminating between the old soldiers and the levies of Narvaez, whom he involves equally in the sin of rebellion. The captain's own version seems a fair one, and I have followed it, therefore, in the text.

them of the good services they had uniformly received from the great body of the nation. They had a sufficient pledge of the future constancy of the Tlascalans in their long-cherished hatred of the Aztecs, which the recent disasters they had suffered from the same quarter could serve only to sharpen. And he urged, with much force, that if any evil designs had been meditated by them against the Spaniards the Tlascalans would, doubtless, have taken advantage of their late disabled condition, and not waited till they had recovered their strength and means of resistance.[18]

While Cortés was thus endeavoring, with somewhat doubtful success, to stifle his own apprehensions, as well as those in the bosoms of his followers, an event occurred which happily brought the affair to an issue, and permanently settled the relations in which the two parties were to stand to each other. This will make it necessary to notice some events which had occurred in Mexico since the expulsion of the Spaniards.

On Montezuma's death, his brother, Cuitlahua, lord of Iztapalapan, conformably to the usage regulating the descent of the Aztec crown, was chosen to succeed him. He was an active prince, of large experience in military affairs, and, by the strength of his character, was well fitted to sustain the tottering fortunes of the monarchy. He appears, moreover, to have been a man of liberal, and what may be called enlightened, taste, to judge from the beautiful gardens which he had filled with rare exotics and which so much attracted the

[18] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 14.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29.

admiration of the Spaniards in his city of Iztapalapan. Unlike his predecessor, he held the white men in detestation, and had, probably, the satisfaction of celebrating his own coronation by the sacrifice of many of them. From the moment of his release from the Spanish quarters, where he had been detained by Cortés, he entered into the patriotic movements of his people. It was he who conducted the assaults both in the streets of the city and on the "Melancholy Night;" and it was at his instigation that the powerful force had been assembled to dispute the passage of the Spaniards in the Vale of Otumba.[19]

Since the evacuation of the capital, he had been busily occupied in repairing the mischief it had received,—restoring the buildings and the bridges and putting it in the best posture of defence. He had endeavored to improve the discipline and arms of his troops. He introduced the long spear among them, and, by attaching the sword-blades taken from the Christians to long poles, contrived a weapon that should be formidable against the cavalry. He summoned his vassals, far and near, to hold themselves in readiness to march to the relief of the capital, if necessary, and, the better to secure their good will, relieved them from some of the burdens usually laid on them. But he was now to experience the instability of a

[19] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 166.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27, 29.—Or, rather, it was "at the instigation of the great Devil, the captain of all the devils, called Satan, who regulated every thing in New Spain by his free will and pleasure, before the coming of the Spaniards," according to Father Sahagun, who begins his chapter with this eloquent exordium.

government which rested not on love, but on fear. The vassals in the neighborhood of the Valley remained true to their allegiance; but others held themselves aloof, uncertain what course to adopt; while others, again, in the more distant provinces, refused obedience altogether, considering this a favorable moment for throwing off the yoke which had so long galled them.[20]

In this emergency, the government sent a deputation to its ancient enemies the Tlascalans. It consisted of six Aztec nobles, bearing a present of cotton cloth, salt, and other articles rarely seen, of late years, in the republic. The lords of the state, astonished at this unprecedented act of condescension in their ancient foe, called the council or senate of the great chiefs together, to give the envoys audience.

Before this body the Aztecs stated the purpose of their mission. They invited the Tlascalans to bury all past grievances in oblivion, and to enter into a treaty with them. All the nations of Anahuac should make common cause in defence of their country against the white men. The Tlascalans would bring down on their own heads the wrath of the gods, if they longer harbored the strangers who had violated and destroyed their temples. If they counted on the support and friendship of their guests, let them take warning from the fate of Mexico, which had received them kindly within its walls, and which, in return, they had filled with blood and ashes. They conjured them, by their reverence for their common religion, not to suffer the

[20] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19

white men, disabled as they now were, to escape from their hands, but to sacrifice them at once to the gods, whose temples they had profaned. In that event, they proffered them their alliance, and the renewal of that friendly traffic which would restore to the republic the possession of the comforts and luxuries of which it had been so long deprived.

The proposals of the ambassadors produced different effects on their audience. Xicotencatl was for embracing them at once. Far better was it, he said, to unite with their kindred, with those who held their own language, their faith and usages, than to throw themselves into the arms of the fierce strangers, who, however they might talk of religion, worshipped no god but gold. This opinion was followed by that of the younger warriors, who readily caught the fire of his enthusiasm. But the elder chiefs, especially his blind old father, one of the four rulers of the state, who seem to have been all heartily in the interests of the Spaniards, and one of them, Maxixca, their stanch friend, strongly expressed their aversion to the proposed alliance with the Aztecs. They were always the same, said the latter,—fair in speech, and false in heart. They now proffered friendship to the Tlascalans. But it was fear which drove them to it, and, when that fear was removed, they would return to their old hostility. Who was it, but these insidious foes, that had so long deprived the country of the very necessaries of life, of which they were now so lavish in their offers? Was it not owing to the white men that the nation at length possessed them? Yet they were called on to sacrifice the white men to the gods!—the warriors who, after

fighting the battles of the Tlascalans, now threw themselves on their hospitality. But the gods abhorred perfidy. And were not their guests the very beings whose coming had been so long predicted by the oracles? "Let us avail ourselves of it," he concluded, "and unite and make common cause with them, until we have humbled our haughty enemy."

This discourse provoked a sharp rejoinder from Xicotencatl, till the passion of the elder chieftain got the better of his patience, and, substituting force for argument, he thrust his younger antagonist, with some violence, from the council-chamber. A proceeding so contrary to the usual decorum of Indian debate astonished the assembly. But, far from bringing censure on its author, it effectually silenced opposition. Even the hot-headed followers of Xicotencatl shrunk from supporting a leader who had incurred such a mark of contemptuous displeasure from the ruler whom they most venerated. His own father openly condemned him; and the patriotic young warrior, gifted with a truer foresight into futurity than his countrymen, was left without support in the council, as he had formerly been on the field of battle. The proffered alliance of the Mexicans was unanimously rejected; and the envoys, fearing that even the sacred character with which they were invested might not protect them from violence, made their escape secretly from the capital.[21]

[21] The proceedings in the Tlascalan senate are reported in more or less detail, but substantially alike, by Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS., —Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 12, cap. 14.—See, also, Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 129,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 111.

The result of the conference was of the last importance to the Spaniards, who, in their present crippled condition, especially if taken unawares, would have been, probably, at the mercy of the Tlascalans. At all events, the union of these latter with the Aztecs would have settled the fate of the expedition; since, in the poverty of his own resources, it was only by adroitly playing off one part of the Indian population against the other that Cortés could ultimately hope for success.

CHAPTER VI.

WAR WITH THE SURROUNDING TRIBES. — SUCCESSES OF THE SPANIARDS. — DEATH OF MAXIXCA. — ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS. — RETURN IN TRIUMPH TO TLASCALA.

1520.

THE Spanish commander, reassured by the result of the deliberations in the Tlascalan senate, now resolved on active operations, as the best means of dissipating the spirit of faction and discontent inevitably fostered by a life of idleness. He proposed to exercise his troops, at first, against some of the neighboring tribes who had laid violent hands on such of the Spaniards as, confiding in their friendly spirit, had passed through their territories. Among these were the Tepeacans, a people often engaged in hostility with the Tlascalans, and who, as mentioned in a preceding chapter, had lately massacred twelve Spaniards in their march to the capital. An expedition against them would receive the ready support of his allies, and would assert the dignity of the Spanish name, much dimmed in the estimation of the natives by the late disasters.

The Tepeacans were a powerful tribe of the same primitive stock as the Aztecs, to whom they acknowledged allegiance. They had transferred this to the Spaniards, on their first march into the country, intimidated by the bloody defeats of their Tlascalan

neighbors. But, since the troubles in the capital, they had again submitted to the Aztec sceptre. Their capital, now a petty village, was a flourishing city at the time of the Conquest, situated in the fruitful plains that stretch far away towards the base of Orizaba.[1] The province contained, moreover, several towns of considerable size, filled with a bold and warlike population.

As these Indians had once acknowledged the authority of Castile, Cortés and his officers regarded their present conduct in the light of rebellion, and, in a council of war, it was decided that those engaged in the late massacre had fairly incurred the doom of slavery.[2] Before proceeding against them, however, the general sent a summons requiring their submission, and offering full pardon for the past, but, in case of refusal, menacing them with the severest retribution. To this the Indians, now in arms, returned a contemptuous answer, challenging the Spaniards to meet them in fight, as they were in want of victims for their sacrifices.

Cortés, without further delay, put himself at the head of his small corps of Spaniards and a large reinforcement of Tlascalan warriors. They were led by the younger Xicotencatl, who now appeared willing to bury his recent animosity, and desirous to take a lesson

[1] The Indian name of the capital,—the same as that of the province, — *Tepejacac*, was corrupted by the Spaniards into *Tepeaca*. It must be admitted to have gained by the corruption.

[2] "Y como aquello vió Cortés, comunicólo con todos nuestros Capitanes, y soldados: y fué acordado, que se hiziesse vn auto por ante Escriuano, que diesse fe de todo lo passado, y que se diessen por esclauos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 130.

in war under the chief who had so often foiled him in the field.[3]

The Tepeacans received their enemy on their borders. A bloody battle followed, in which the Spanish horse were somewhat embarrassed by the tall maize that covered part of the plain. They were successful in the end, and the Tepeacans, after holding their ground like good warriors, were at length routed with great slaughter. A second engagement, which took place a few days after, was followed by like decisive results; and the victorious Spaniards with their allies, marching straightway on the city of Tepeaca, entered it in triumph.[4] No further resistance was attempted by the enemy, and the whole province, to avoid further calamities, eagerly tendered its submission. Cortés, however, inflicted the meditated chastisement on the places implicated in the massacre. The inhabitants were branded with a hot iron as slaves, and, after the royal fifth had been reserved, were distributed between his own men and the allies.[5] The Spaniards were familiar with the system of *repartimientos* established

3 The chroniclers estimate his army at 50,000 warriors; one-half, according to Toribio, of the disposable military force of the republic. "De la cual (Tlascala), como ya tengo dicho, solian salir cien mil hombres de pelea." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 16.

4 "That night," says the credulous Herrera, speaking of the carouse that followed one of their victories, "the Indian allies had a grand supper of legs and arms; for, besides an incredible number of roasts on wooden spits, they had fifty thousand pots of stewed human flesh"! (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 15.) Such a banquet would not have smelt savory in the nostrils of Cortés.

5 "Y allí hiziéron hazer el hierro con que se auian de herrar los que se tomauan por esclauos, que era una G., que quiere decir *guerra*." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 130.

in the Islands; but this was the first example of slavery in New Spain.* It was justified, in the opinion of the general and his military casuists, by the aggravated offences of the party. The sentence, however, was not countenanced by the crown,[6] which, as the colonial legislation abundantly shows, was ever at issue with the craving and mercenary spirit of the colonist.

Satisfied with this display of his vengeance, Cortés now established his headquarters at Tepeaca, which, situated in a cultivated country, afforded easy means for maintaining an army, while its position on the Mexican frontier made it a good *point d'appui* for future operations.

The Aztec government, since it had learned the issue of its negotiations at Tlascala, had been diligent in fortifying its frontier in that quarter. The garrisons usually maintained there were strengthened, and large bodies of men were marched in the same direction, with orders to occupy the strong positions on the borders. The conduct of these troops was in their usual style of arrogance and extortion, and greatly disgusted the inhabitants of the country.

[6] Solís, Conquista, lib. 5, cap. 3.

* [It may have been the first instance of natives being reduced to slavery by the Spaniards, but female slaves at least had been given to them on several previous occasions by the Mexican chiefs. The present case has also no connection with the system of *repartimientos*, by which, after the conquest was effected, the soil and its inhabitants were divided among the new possessors. In the case of the Tepeacans, no attempt was made to enslave the adult males, whose services were not needed, and who would have brought only embarrassment to their captors. See Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 135.—ED.]

Among the places thus garrisoned by the Aztecs was Quauhquechollan,[7] a city containing thirty thousand inhabitants, according to the historians, and lying to the southwest twelve leagues or more from the Spanish quarters. It stood at the extremity of a deep valley, resting against a bold range of hills, or rather mountains, and flanked by two rivers with exceedingly high and precipitous banks. The only avenue by which the town could be easily approached was protected by a stone wall more than twenty feet high and of great thickness.[8] Into this place, thus strongly defended by art as well as by nature, the Aztec emperor had thrown a garrison of several thousand warriors, while a much more formidable force occupied the heights commanding the city.

The cacique of this strong post, impatient of the Mexican yoke, sent to Cortés, inviting him to march to his relief, and promising a co-operation of the citizens in an assault on the Aztec quarters. The general eagerly embraced the proposal, and detached Cristóval de Olid, with two hundred Spaniards and a strong body of Tlascalans, to support the friendly cacique.[9] On the way, Olid was joined by many volunteers from the

[7] Called by the Spaniards *Huacachula*, and spelt with every conceivable diversity by the old writers, who may be excused for stumbling over such a confusion of consonants.

[8] "Y toda la Ciudad está cercada de muy fuerte Muro de cal y canto, tan alto, como quatro estados por de fuera de la Ciudad: é por de dentro está casi igual con el suelo. Y por toda la Muralla va su petril, tan alto, como medio estado, para pelear, tiene quatro entradas, tan anchas, como uno puede entrar á Caballo." Rel. Seg., p. 162.

[9] This cavalier's name is usually spelt Olid by the chroniclers. In a copy of his own signature I find it written Oii.

Indian city and from the neighboring capital of Cholula, all equally pressing their services. The number and eagerness of these auxiliaries excited suspicions in the bosom of the cavalier. They were strengthened by the surmises of the soldiers of Narvaez, whose imaginations were still haunted, it seems, by the horrors of the *noche triste*, and who saw in the friendly alacrity of their new allies evidence of an insidious understanding with the Aztecs. Olid, catching this distrust, made a countermarch on Cholula, where he seized the suspected chiefs, who had been most forward in offering their services, and sent them under a strong guard to Cortés.

The general, after a careful examination, was satisfied of the integrity of the suspected parties. He, expressing his deep regret at the treatment they had received, made them such amends as he could by liberal presents, and, as he now saw the impropriety of committing an affair of such importance to other hands, put himself at the head of his remaining force and effected a junction with his officer in Cholula.

He had arranged with the cacique of the city against which he was marching, that on the appearance of the Spaniards the inhabitants should rise on the garrison. Everything succeeded as he had planned. No sooner had the Christian battalions defiled on the plain before the town, than the inhabitants attacked the garrison with the utmost fury. The latter, abandoning the outer defences of the place, retreated to their own quarters in the principal *teocalli*, where they maintained a hard struggle with their adversaries. In the heat of it, Cortés, at the head of his little body of horse, rode

into the place, and directed the assault in person. The Aztecs made a fierce defence. But, fresh troops constantly arriving to support the assailants, the works were stormed, and every one of the garrison was put to the sword.[10]

The Mexican forces, meanwhile, stationed on the neighboring eminences, had marched down to the support of their countrymen in the town, and formed in order of battle in the suburbs, where they were encountered by the Tlascalan levies. "They mustered," says Cortés, speaking of the enemy, "at least thirty thousand men; and it was a brave sight for the eye to look on,—such a beautiful array of warriors glistening with gold and jewels and variegated feather-work."[11] The action was well contested between the two Indian armies. The suburbs were set on fire, and, in the midst of the flames, Cortés and his squadrons, rushing on the enemy, at length broke their array, and compelled them to fall back in disorder into the narrow gorge of the mountain, from which they had lately descended. The pass was rough and precipitous. Spaniards and Tlascalans followed close in the rear, and the light troops, scaling the high wall of the valley, poured down on the enemy's flanks. The heat was intense, and both parties were so much exhausted by their efforts

[10] "I should have been very glad to have taken some alive," says Cortés, "who could have informed me of what was going on in the great city, and who had been lord there since the death of Montezuma. But I succeeded in saving only one; and he was more dead than alive." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 159.

[11] "Y á ver que cosa era aquella, los quales eran mas de treinta mil Hombres, y la mas lúcida Gente, que hemos visto, porque trahian muchas Joyas de Oro, y Plata, y Plumajes." Ibid., p. 160.

that it was with difficulty, says the chronicler, that the one could pursue, or the other fly.[12] They were not too weary, however, to slay. The Mexicans were routed with terrible slaughter. They found no pity from their Indian foes, who had a long account of injuries to settle with them. Some few sought refuge by flying higher up into the fastnesses of the sierra. They were followed by their indefatigable enemy, until, on the bald summit of the ridge, they reached the Mexican encampment. It covered a wide tract of ground. Various utensils, ornamented dresses, and articles of luxury, were scattered round, and the number of slaves in attendance showed the barbaric pomp with which the nobles of Mexico went to their campaigns.[13] It was a rich booty for the victors, who spread over the deserted camp, and loaded themselves with the spoil, until the gathering darkness warned them to descend.[14]

[12] "Alcanzando muchos por una Cuesta arriba muy agra; y tal, que quando acabámos de encumbrar la Sierra, ni los Enemigos, ni nosotros podiamos ir atras, ni adelante: é assí caiéron muchos de ellos muertos, y ahogados de la calor, sin herida ninguna." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 160.

[13] "Porque demas de la Gente de Guerra, tenian mucho aparato de Servidores, y fornecimiento para su Real." Ibid., p. 160.

[14] The story of the capture of this strong post is told very differently by Captain Diaz. According to him, Olid, when he had fallen back on Cholula, in consequence of the refusal of his men to advance, under the strong suspicion which they entertained of some foul practice from their allies, received such a stinging rebuke from Cortés that he compelled his troops to resume their march, and, attacking the enemy "with the fury of a tiger," totally routed them. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 132.) But this version of the affair is not endorsed, so far as I am aware, by any contemporary. Cortés is so compendious in his report that it is often necessary to supply the omissions with

Cortés followed up the blow by assaulting the strong-town of Itzocan, held also by a Mexican garrison, and situated in the depths of a green valley watered by artificial canals and smiling in all the rich abundance of this fruitful region of the plateau.[15] The place, though stoutly defended, was stormed and carried; the Aztecs were driven across a river which ran below the town, and, although the light bridges that traversed it were broken down in the flight, whether by design or accident, the Spaniards, fording and swimming the stream as they could, found their way to the opposite bank, following up the chase with the eagerness of bloodhounds. Here, too, the booty was great; and the Indian auxiliaries flocked by thousands to the banners of the chief who so surely led them on to victory and plunder.[16]

Soon afterwards, Cortés returned to his headquarters at Tepeaca. Thence he detached his officers on expe-

the details of other writers. But, where he is positive in his statements,—unless there be some reason to suspect a bias,—his practice of writing on the spot, and the peculiar facilities for information afforded by his position, make him decidedly the best authority.

[15] Cortés, with an eye less sensible to the picturesque than his great predecessor in the track of discovery, Columbus, was full as quick in detecting the capabilities of the soil. "Tiene un Valle redondo muy fertil de Frutas, y Algodon, que en ninguna parte de los Puertos arriba se hace por la gran frialdad; y allí es Tierra caliente, y caúsalo, que está muy abrigada de Sierras; todo este Valle se riega por muy buenas Azequias, que tienen muy bien sacadas, y concertadas." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 164, 165.

[16] So numerous, according to Cortés, that they covered hill and dale, as far as the eye could reach, mustering more than a hundred and twenty thousand strong! (Ibid., p. 162.) When the Conquerors attempt anything like a precise numeration, it will be as safe to substitute "a multitude," "a great force," etc., trusting the amount to the reader's own imagination.

ditions which were usually successful. Sandoval, in particular, marched against a large body of the enemy lying between the camp and Vera Cruz, defeated them in two decisive battles, and thus restored the communications with the port.

The result of these operations was the reduction of that populous and cultivated territory which lies between the great *volcan*, on the west, and the mighty skirts of Orizaba, on the east. Many places, also, in the neighboring province of Mixtecapan acknowledged the authority of the Spaniards, and others from the remote region of Oaxaca sent to claim their protection. The conduct of Cortés towards his allies had gained him great credit for disinterestedness and equity. The Indian cities in the adjacent territory appealed to him, as their umpire, in their differences with one another, and cases of disputed succession in their governments were referred to his arbitration. By his discreet and moderate policy he insensibly acquired an ascendency over their counsels which had been denied to the ferocious Aztec. His authority extended wider and wider every day; and a new empire grew up in the very heart of the land, forming a counterpoise to the colossal power which had so long overshadowed it.[17]

Cortés now felt himself strong enough to put in execution the plans for recovering the capital, over which

[17] For the hostilities with the Indian tribes, noticed in the preceding pages, see, in addition to the Letter of Cortés, so often cited, Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 15, 16,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 90,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 130, 132, 134,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 114-117,—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6,—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

he had been brooding ever since the hour of his expulsion. He had greatly undervalued the resources of the Aztec monarchy. He was now aware, from bitter experience, that, to vanquish it, his own forces, and all he could hope to muster, would be incompetent, without a very extensive support from the Indians themselves. A large army would, moreover, require large supplies for its maintenance, and these could not be regularly obtained, during a protracted siege, without the friendly co-operation of the natives. On such support he might now safely calculate from Tlascala and the other Indian territories, whose warriors were so eager to serve under his banners. His past acquaintance with them had instructed him in their national character and system of war; while the natives who had fought under his command, if they had caught little of the Spanish tactics, had learned to act in concert with the white men and to obey him implicitly as their commander. This was a considerable improvement in such wild and disorderly levies, and greatly augmented the strength derived from numbers.

Experience showed that in a future conflict with the capital it would not do to trust to the causeways, but that, to succeed, he must command the lake. He proposed, therefore, to build a number of vessels like those constructed under his orders in Montezuma's time and afterwards destroyed by the inhabitants. For this he had still the services of the same experienced ship builder, Martin Lopez, who, as we have seen, had fortunately escaped the slaughter of the "Melancholy Night." Cortés now sent this man to Tlascala, with orders to build thirteen brigantines, which might be

taken to pieces and carried on the shoulders of the Indians to be launched on the waters of Lake Tezcuco. The sails, rigging, and iron-work were to be brought from Vera Cruz, where they had been stored since their removal from the dismantled ships. It was a bold conception, that of constructing a fleet to be transported across forest and mountain before it was launched on its destined waters! But it suited the daring genius of Cortés, who, with the co-operation of his stanch Tlascalan confederates, did not doubt his ability to carry it into execution.

It was with no little regret that the general learned at this time the death of his good friend Maxixca, the old lord of Tlascala, who had stood by him so steadily in the hour of adversity. He had fallen a victim to that terrible epidemic, the smallpox, which was now sweeping over the land like fire over the prairies, smiting down prince and peasant, and adding another to the long train of woes that followed the march of the white men. It was imported into the country, it is said, by a negro slave in the fleet of Narvaez.[18] It first broke out in Cempoalla. The poor natives, ignorant of the best mode of treating the loathsome disorder, sought relief in their usual practice of bathing in cold water, which greatly aggravated their trouble. From Cempoalla it spread rapidly over the neighboring country,

[18] "La primera fué de viruela, y comenzó de esta manera. Siendo Capitan y Governador Hernando Cortés al tiempo que el Capitan Pánfilo de Narvaez desembarcó en esta tierra, en uno de sus navíos vino un negro herido de viruelas, la cual enfermedad nunca en esta tierra se habia visto, y esta sazon estaba esta nueva España en estremo muy llena de gente." Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 1.

and, penetrating through Tlascala, reached the Aztec capital, where Montezuma's successor, Cuitlahua, fell one of its first victims. Thence it swept down towards the borders of the Pacific, leaving its path strewn with the dead bodies of the natives, who, in the strong language of a contemporary, perished in heaps like cattle stricken with the murrain.[19] It does not seem to have been fatal to the Spaniards, many of whom, probably, had already had the disorder, and who were, at all events, acquainted with the proper method of treating it.

The death of Maxixca was deeply regretted by the troops, who lost in him a true and most efficient ally. With his last breath he commended them to his son and successor, as the great beings whose coming into the country had been so long predicted by the oracles.[20] He expressed a desire to die in the profession of the Christian faith. Cortés no sooner learned his condition than he despatched Father Olmedo to Tlascala. The friar found that Maxixca had already caused a crucifix to be placed before his sick couch, as the object of his adoration. After explaining, as intelligibly as he could, the truths of revelation, he baptized the dying chieftain; and the Spaniards had the satisfaction to believe that the soul of their benefactor was exempted from the doom of eternal perdition that

[19] "Morian como chinches á montones." (Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, ubi supra.) "So great was the number of those who died of this disease that there was no possibility of burying them, and in Mexico the dead were thrown into the canals, then filled with water, until the air was poisoned with the stench of putrid bodies." Sahagun Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 1.

[20] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 136.

hung over the unfortunate Indian who perished in his unbelief.[21]

Their late brilliant successes seem to have reconciled most of the disaffected soldiers to the prosecution of the war. There were still a few among them, the secretary Duero, Bermudez the treasurer, and others high in office, or wealthy hidalgos, who looked with disgust on another campaign, and now loudly reiterated their demand of a free passage to Cuba. To this Cortés, satisfied with the support on which he could safely count, made no further objection. Having once given his consent, he did all in his power to facilitate their departure and provide for their comfort. He ordered the best ship at Vera Cruz to be placed at their disposal, to be well supplied with provisions and every thing necessary for the voyage, and sent Alvarado to the coast to superintend the embarkation. He took the most courteous leave of them, with assurances of his own unalterable regard. But, as the event proved, those who could part from him at this crisis had little sympathy with his fortunes; and we find Duero not long afterwards in Spain, supporting the claims of Velasquez before the emperor, in opposition to those of his former friend and commander.

The loss of these few men was amply compensated by the arrival of others, whom Fortune—to use no higher term—most unexpectedly threw in his way. The first of these came in a small vessel sent from Cuba by the governor, Velasquez, with stores for the

[21] Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12 cap. 39.

colony at Vera Cruz. He was not aware of the late transactions in the country, and of the discomfiture of his officer. In the vessel came despatches, it is said, from Fonseca, bishop of Burgos, instructing Narvaez to send Cortés, if he had not already done so, for trial to Spain.[22] The alcalde of Vera Cruz, agreeably to the general's instructions, allowed the captain of the bark to land, who had no doubt that the country was in the hands of Narvaez. He was undeceived by being seized, together with his men, so soon as they had set foot on shore. The vessel was then secured; and the commander and his crew, finding out their error, were persuaded without much difficulty to join their countrymen in Tlascala.

A second vessel, sent soon after by Velasquez, shared the same fate, and those on board consented, also, to take their chance in the expedition under Cortés.

About the same time, Garay, the governor of Jamaica, fitted out three ships with an armed force to plant a colony on the Panuco, a river which pours into the Gulf a few degrees north of Villa Rica. Garay persisted in establishing this settlement, in contempt of the claims of Cortés, who had already entered into a friendly communication with the inhabitants of that region. But the crews experienced such a rough reception from the natives on landing, and lost so many men, that they were glad to take to their vessels again. One of these foundered in a storm. The others put into the port of Vera Cruz to restore the men, much weakened by hunger and disease. Here they were

[22] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 131.

kindly received, their wants supplied, their wounds healed; when they were induced, by the liberal promises of Cortes, to abandon the disastrous service of their employer and enlist under his own prosperous banner. The reinforcements obtained from these sources amounted to full a hundred and fifty men, well provided with arms and ammunition, together with twenty horses. By this strange concurrence of circumstances, Cortés saw himself in possession of the supplies he most needed; that, too, from the hands of his enemies, whose costly preparations were thus turned to the benefit of the very man whom they were designed to ruin.

His good fortune did not stop here. A ship from the Canaries touched at Cuba, freighted with arms and military stores for the adventurers in the New World. Their commander heard there of the recent discoveries in Mexico, and, thinking it would afford a favorable market for him, directed his course to Vera Cruz. He was not mistaken. The alcalde, by the general's orders, purchased both ship and cargo; and the crews, catching the spirit of adventure, followed their countrymen into the interior. There seemed to be a magic in the name of Cortés, which drew all who came within hearing of it under his standard.[23]

Having now completed the arrangements for settling his new conquests, there seemed to be no further reason for postponing his departure to Tlascala. He was first solicited by the citizens of Tepeaca to leave a garrison

[23] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 131, 133, 136.—Herrera, Hist. general, ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 154, 167.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 16.

with them, to protect them from the vengeance of the Aztecs. Cortés acceded to the request, and, considering the central position of the town favorable for maintaining his conquests, resolved to plant a colony there. For this object he selected sixty of his soldiers, most of whom were disabled by wounds or infirmity. He appointed the alcaldes, regidores, and other functionaries of a civic magistracy. The place he called *Segura de la Frontera*, or Security of the Frontier.[24] It received valuable privileges as a city, a few years later, from the emperor Charles the Fifth,[25] and rose to some consideration in the age of the Conquest. But its consequence soon after declined. Even its Castilian name, with the same caprice which has decided the fate of more than one name in our own country, was gradually supplanted by its ancient one, and the little village of Tepeaca is all that now commemorates the once flourishing Indian capital, and the second Spanish colony in Mexico.

While at Segura, Cortés wrote that celebrated letter to the emperor—the second in the series—so often cited in the preceding pages. It takes up the narrative with the departure from Vera Cruz, and exhibits in a brief and comprehensive form the occurrences up to the time at which we are now arrived. In the concluding page, the general, after noticing the embarrassments under which he labors, says, in his usual manly spirit, that he holds danger and fatigue light in comparison with the attainment of his object, and that he is confident a short time will restore the

[24] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 156.

[25] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 153.

Spaniards to their former position and repair all their losses.[26]

He notices the resemblance of Mexico, in many of its features and productions, to the mother country, and requests that it may henceforth be called "New Spain of the Ocean Sea."[27] He finally requests that a commission may be sent out, at once, to investigate his conduct and to verify the accuracy of his statements.

This letter, which was printed at Seville the year after its reception, has been since reprinted, and translated, more than once.[28] It excited a great sensation at the court, and among the friends of science generally. The previous discoveries in the New World had disappointed the expectations which had been formed after the solution of the grand problem of its existence. They had brought to light only rude tribes, which, however gentle and inoffensive in their manners, were still in the primitive stages of barbarism. Here was an

[26] "É creo, como ya á Vuestra Magestad he dicho, que en muy breve tomará al estado, en que antes yo la tenia, é se restaurarán las pérdidas pasadas." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 167.

[27] "Me pareció, que el mas conveniente nombre para esta dicha Tierra, era llamarse *la Nueva España del Mar Océano:* y assí en nombre de Vuestra Magestad se le puso aqueste nombre; humildemente suplico á Vuestra Alteza lo tenga por bien, y mande, que se nombre assí." (Ibid., p. 169.) The name of "New Spain," without other addition, had been before given by Grijalva to Yucatan. *Ante*, Book 2, Chapter 1.

[28] It was dated, "De la Villa Segura de la Frontera de esta Nueva-España, á treinta de Octubre de mil quinientos veinte años." But, in consequence of the loss of the ship intended to bear it, the letter was not sent till the spring of the following year; leaving the nation still in ignorance of the fate of the gallant adventurers in Mexico, and the magnitude of their discoveries.

authentic account of a vast nation, potent and populous, exhibiting an elaborate social polity, well advanced in the arts of civilization, occupying a soil that teemed with mineral treasures and with a boundless variety of vegetable products, stores of wealth, both natural and artificial, that seemed, for the first time, to realize the golden dreams in which the great discoverer of the New World had so fondly, and in his own day so fallaciously, indulged. Well might the scholar of that age exult in the revelation of these wonders, which so many had long, but in vain, desired to see.[29]

With this letter went another to the emperor, signed, as it would seem, by nearly every officer and soldier in the camp. It expatiated on the obstacles thrown in the way of the expedition by Velasquez and Narvaez, and the great prejudice this had caused to the royal interests. It then set forth the services of Cortés, and besought the emperor to confirm him in his authority, and not to allow any interference with one who, from his personal character, his intimate knowledge of the land and its people, and the attachment of his soldiers, was the man best qualified in all the world to achieve the conquest of the country.[30]

[29] The state of feeling occasioned by these discoveries may be seen in the correspondence of Peter Martyr, then residing at the court of Castile. See, in particular, his epistle, dated March, 1521, to his noble pupil, the Marquis de Mondejar, in which he dwells with unbounded satisfaction on all the rich stores of science which the expedition of Cortés had thrown open to the world Opus Epistolarum, ep. 771.

[30] This memorial is in that part of my collection made by the former President of the Spanish Academy, Vargas Ponçe. It is signed by four hundred and forty-four names; and it is remarkable that this roll, which includes every other familiar name in the army, should not

It added not a little to the perplexities of Cortés that he was still in entire ignorance of the light in which his conduct was regarded in Spain. He had not even heard whether his despatches, sent the year preceding from Vera Cruz, had been received. Mexico was as far removed from all intercourse with the civilized world as if it had been placed at the antipodes. Few vessels had entered, and none had been allowed to leave, its ports. The governor of Cuba, an island distant but a few days' sail, was yet ignorant, as we have seen, of the fate of his armament. On the arrival of every new vessel or fleet on these shores, Cortés might well doubt whether it brought aid to his undertaking, or a royal commission to supersede him. His sanguine spirit relied on the former; though the latter was much the more probable, considering the intimacy of his enemy, the governor, with Bishop Fonseca, a man jealous of his authority, and one who, from his station at the head of the Indian department, held a predominant control over the affairs of the New World. It was the policy of Cortés, therefore, to lose no time; to push forward his preparations, lest another should be permitted to snatch the laurel now almost within his grasp. Could he but reduce the Aztec capital, he felt that he should be safe, and that, in whatever light his irregular proceedings might now be viewed, his services in that event would far more than counterbalance them in the eyes both of the crown and of the country.

contain that of Bernal Diaz del Castillo. It can only be accounted for by his illness; as he tells us he was confined to his bed by a fever about this time. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 134.

The general wrote, also, to the Royal Audience at St. Domingo, in order to interest them in his cause. He sent four vessels to the same island, to obtain a further supply of arms and ammunition; and, the better to stimulate the cupidity of adventurers and allure them to the expedition, he added specimens of the beautiful fabrics of the country, and of its precious metals.[31] The funds for procuring these important supplies were, probably, derived from the plunder gathered in the late battles, and the gold which, as already remarked, had been saved from the general wreck by the Castilian convoy.

It was the middle of December when Cortés, having completed all his arrangements, set out on his return to Tlascala, ten or twelve leagues distant. He marched in the van of the army, and took the way of Cholula. How different was his condition from that in which he had left the republican capital not five months before! His march was a triumphal procession, displaying the various banners and military ensigns taken from the enemy, long files of captives, and all the rich spoils of conquest gleaned from many a hard-fought field. As the army passed through the towns and villages, the inhabitants poured out to greet them, and, as they drew near to Tlascala, the whole population, men, women, and children, came forth, celebrating their

[31] Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 179.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 18.—Alonso de Avila went as the bearer of despatches to St. Domingo. Bernal Diaz, who is not averse, now and then, to a fling at his commander, says that Cortés was willing to get rid of this gallant cavalier, because he was too independent and plain-spoken. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 136.

return with songs, dancing, and music. Arches decorated with flowers were thrown across the streets through which they passed, and a Tlascalan orator addressed the general, on his entrance into the city, in a lofty panegyric on his late achievements, proclaiming him the "avenger of the nation." Amidst this pomp and triumphal show, Cortés and his principal officers were seen clad in deep mourning in honor of their friend Maxixca. And this tribute of respect to the memory of their venerated ruler touched the Tlascalans more sensibly than all the proud display of military trophies.[32]

The general's first act was to confirm the son of his deceased friend in the succession, which had been contested by an illegitimate brother. The youth was but twelve years of age; and Cortés prevailed on him without difficulty to follow his father's example and receive baptism. He afterwards knighted him with his own hand; the first instance, probably, of the order of chivalry being conferred on an American Indian.[33] The elder Xicotencatl was also persuaded to embrace Christianity; and the example of their rulers had its obvious effect in preparing the minds of the people for the reception of the truth. Cortés, whether from the suggestions of Olmedo, or from the engrossing nature of his own affairs, did not press the work of conversion further at this time, but wisely left

[32] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 136.—Herrera, Hist. general dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.

[33] Ibid., ubi supra —"Hiçolo," says Herrera, "i armóle caballero, al vso de Castilla; i porque lo fuese de Jesu-Christo, le hiço bautiçar, se llamó D. Lorençe Maxiscatzin."

the good seed, already sown, to ripen in secret, till time should bring forth the harvest.

The Spanish commander, during his short stay in Tlascala, urged forward the preparations for the campaign. He endeavored to drill the Tlascalans and to give them some idea of European discipline and tactics. He caused new arms to be made, and the old ones to be put in order. Powder was manufactured with the aid of sulphur obtained by some adventurous cavaliers from the smoking throat of Popocatepetl.[34] The construction of the brigantines went forward prosperously under the direction of Lopez, with the aid of the Tlascalans.[35] Timber was cut in the forests, and pitch, an article unknown to the Indians, was obtained from the pines on the neighboring Sierra de Malinche. The rigging and other appurtenances were transported by the Indian *tamanes* from Villa Rica; and by Christmas the work was so far advanced that it was no longer necessary for Cortés to delay the march to Mexico.

[34] For an account of the manner in which this article was procured by Montaño and his doughty companions, see *ante*, p. 46.

[35] "Ansí se hiciéron trece bergantines en el barrio de Atempa, junto á una hermita que se llama San Buenaventura, los quales hizo y otro Martin Lopez uno de los primeros conquistadores, y le ayudó Neguez Gomez." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

CHAPTER VII.

GUATEMOZIN, EMPEROR OF THE AZTECS.—PREPARATIONS FOR THE MARCH.—MILITARY CODE.—SPANIARDS CROSS THE SIERRA. — ENTER TEZCUCO. — PRINCE IXTLILXOCHITL.

1520.

WHILE the events related in the preceding chapter were passing, an important change had taken place in the Aztec monarchy. Montezuma's brother and successor, Cuitlahua, had suddenly died of the smallpox, after a brief reign of four months,—brief, but glorious, for it had witnessed the overthrow of the Spaniards and their expulsion from Mexico.[1] On the death of their warlike chief, the electors were convened, as usual, to supply the vacant throne. It was an office of great responsibility in the dark hour of their fortunes.

[1] Solís dismisses this prince with the remark "that he reigned but a few days; long enough, however, for his indolence and apathy to efface the memory of his name among the people." (Conquista, lib. 4, cap. 16.) Whence the historiographer of the Indies borrowed the coloring for this portrait I cannot conjecture; certainly not from the ancient authorities, which uniformly delineate the character and conduct of the Aztec sovereign in the light represented in the text. Cortés, who ought to know, describes him "as held to be very wise and valiant." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 166.—See, also, Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 16,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 118.

The *teoteuctli*, or high-priest, invoked the blessing of the supreme God on their deliberations. His prayer is still extant. It was the last one ever made on a similar occasion in Anahuac, and a few extracts from it may interest the reader, as a specimen of Aztec eloquence:

"O Lord! thou knowest that the days of our sovereign are at an end, for thou hast placed him beneath thy feet. He abides in the place of his retreat; he has trodden the path which we are all to tread; he has gone to the house whither we are all to follow,—the house of eternal darkness, where no light cometh. He is gathered to his rest, and no one henceforth shall disquiet him. . . . All these were the princes, his predecessors, who sat on the imperial throne, directing the affairs of thy kingdom; for thou art the universal lord and emperor, by whose will and movement the whole world is directed; thou needest not the counsel of another. They laid down the intolerable burden of government, and left it to him, their successor. Yet he sojourned but a few days in his kingdom,—but a few days had we enjoyed his presence, when thou summonedst him away to follow those who had ruled over the land before him. And great cause has he for thankfulness, that thou hast relieved him from so grievous a load, and placed him in tranquillity and rest. . . . Who now shall order matters for the good of the people and the realm? Who shall appoint the judges to administer justice to thy people? Who now shall bid the drum and the flute to sound, and gather together the veteran soldiers and the men mighty in battle? Our Lord and our Defence! wilt thou, in thy

wisdom, elect one who shall be worthy to sit on the throne of thy kingdom; one who shall bear the grievous burden of government; who shall comfort and cherish thy poor people, even as the mother cherisheth her offspring? . . . O Lord most merciful! pour forth thy light and thy splendor over this thine empire! . . . Order it so that thou shalt be served in all, and through all."[a]

[a] The reader of Spanish will see that in the version in the text I have condensed the original, which abounds in the tautology and repetitions characteristic of the compositions of a rude people. "Señor nuestro! ya V. M. sabe como es muerto nuestro N.: ya lo habeis puesto debajo de vuestros pies: ya está en su recogimiento, y es ido por el camino que todos hemos de ir y á la casa donde hemos de morar, casa de perpetuas tinieblas, donde ni hay ventana, ni luz alguna: ya está en el reposo donde nadie le desasosegará. . . . Todos estos señores y reyes rigiéron, gobernáron, y gozáron del señorío y dignidad real, y del trono y sitial del imperio, los cuales ordenáron y concertáron las cosas de vuestro reino, que sois el universal señor y emperador, por cuyo albedrio y motivo se rige todo el universo, y que no teneis necesidad de consejo de ningun otro. Ya estos dichos dejáron la carga intolerable del gobierno que tragéron sobre sus hombros, y lo dejáron á su succesor N., el cual por algunos pocos dias tuvo en pie su señorío y reino, y ahora ya se ha ido en pos de ellos al otro mundo, porque vos le mandásteis que fuese y le llamásteis, y por haberle descargado de tan gran carga, y quitado tan gran trabajo, y haberle puesto en paz y en reposo, está muy obligado á daros gracias. Algunos pocos dias le lográmos, y ahora para siempre se ausentó de nosotros para nunca mas volver al mundo. . . . ¿Quien ordenará y dispondrá las cosas necesarias al bien del pueblo, señorío y reino? ¿Quien elegirá á los jueces particulares, que tengan carga de la gente baja por los barrios? ¿Quien mandará tocar el atambor y pífano para juntar gente para la guerra? ¿Y quien reunirá y acaudillará á los soldados viejos, y hombres diestros en la pelea? Señor nuestro y amparador nuestro! tenga por bien V. M. de elegir, y señalar alguna persona suficiente para que tenga vuestro trono, y lleve á cuestas la carga pesada del régimen de la república, regocige y regale á los

The choice fell on Quauhtemotzin, or Guatemozin, as euphoniously corrupted by the Spaniards.[3] He was nephew to the two last monarchs, and married his cousin, the beautiful princess Tecuichpo, Montezuma's daughter. "He was not more than twenty-five years old, and elegant in his person for an Indian," says one who had seen him often; "valiant, and so terrible that his followers trembled in his presence."[4] He did not shrink from the perilous post that was offered to him; and, as he saw the tempest gathering darkly around, he prepared to meet it like a man. Though young, he had ample experience in military matters, and had distinguished himself above all others in the bloody conflicts of the capital. He bore a sort of religious hatred to the Spaniards, like that which Hannibal is said to have sworn, and which he certainly cherished, against his Roman foes.

populares, bien así como la madre regala á su hijo, poniéndole en su regazo. . . . O señor nuestro humanísimo! dad lumbre y resplandor de vuestra mano á esto reino! . . . Hágase como V. M. fuere servido en todo, y por todo." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 5.

3 The Spaniards appear to have changed the *Qua*, beginning Aztec names, into *Gua*, in the same manner as, in the mother country, they changed the *Wad* at the beginning of Arabic names into *Guad.* (See Condé, El Nubiense, Descripcion de España, notas, passim.) The Aztec *tzin* was added to the names of sovereigns and great lords, as a mark of reverence. Thus, Cuitlahua was called Cuitlahuatzin. This termination, usually dropped by the Spaniards, has been retained from accident, or perhaps for the sake of euphony, in Guatemozin's name.

4 "Mancebo de hasta veynte y cinco años, bien gentil hombre para ser Indio, y muy esforçado, y se hizo temer de tal manera, que todos los suyos temblauan dél; y estaua casado con vna hija de Montezumá, bien hermosa muger para ser India." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 130.

By means of his spies, Guatemozin made himself acquainted with the movements of the Spaniards and their design to besiege the capital. He prepared for it by sending away the useless part of the population, while he called in his potent vassals from the neighborhood. He continued the plans of his predecessor for strengthening the defences of the city, reviewed his troops, and stimulated them by prizes to excel in their exercises. He made harangues to his soldiers to rouse them to a spirit of desperate resistance. He encouraged his vassals throughout the empire to attack the white men wherever they were to be met with, setting a price on their heads, as well as on the persons of all who should be brought alive to him in Mexico.[5] And it was no uncommon thing for the Spaniards to find hanging up in the temples of the conquered places the arms and accoutrements of their unfortunate countrymen who had been seized and sent to the capital for sacrifice.[6] Such was the young monarch who was now called to the tottering throne of the Aztecs; worthy, by his bold and magnanimous nature, to sway the sceptre of his country in the most flourishing period of her renown, and now, in her distress, devoting himself in the true spirit of a patriot prince to uphold her falling fortunes or bravely perish with them.[7]

[5] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.

[6] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 134.

[7] One may call to mind the beautiful invocation which Racine has put into the mouth of Joad:

> "Venez, cher rejeton d'une vaillante race,
> Remplir vos défenseurs d'une nouvelle audace;
> Venez du diadème à leurs yeux vous couvrir,
> Et périssez du moins en roi, s'il faut périr."
>
> ATHALIE, acte 4, scène 5.

We must now return to the Spaniards in Tlascala, where we left them preparing to resume their march on Mexico. Their commander had the satisfaction to see his troops tolerably complete in their appointments; varying, indeed, according to the condition of the different reinforcements which had arrived from time to time, but, on the whole, superior to those of the army with which he had first invaded the country. His whole force fell little short of six hundred men; forty of whom were cavalry, together with eighty arquebusiers and crossbowmen. The rest were armed with sword and target, and with the copper-headed pike of Chinantla. He had nine cannon of a moderate calibre, and was indifferently supplied with powder.[8]

As his forces were drawn up in order of march, Cortés rode through the ranks, exhorting his soldiers, as usual with him on these occasions, to be true to themselves and the enterprise in which they were embarked. He told them they were to march against *rebels*, who had once acknowledged allegiance to the Spanish sovereign;[9] against barbarians, the enemies of their religion. They were to fight the battles of the Cross and of the crown; to fight their own battles, to wipe away the stain from their arms, to avenge their injuries, and the loss of the dear companions who had been butchered on the field or on the accursed altar

[8] Rel. Tercera de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 183.—Most, if not all, of the authorities—a thing worthy of note—concur in this estimate of the Spanish forces.

[9] "Y como sin causa ninguna todos los Naturales de Colúa, que son los de la gran Ciudad de Temixtitan, y los de todas las otras Provincias á ellas sujetas, no solamente se habian *rebelado* contra Vuestra Magestad." Ibid., ubi supra.

of sacrifice. Never was there a war which offered higher incentives to the Christian cavalier; a war which opened to him riches and renown in this life, and an imperishable glory in that to come.[10]

Thus did the politic chief touch all the secret springs of devotion, honor, and ambition in the bosoms of his martial audience, waking the mettle of the most sluggish before leading him on the perilous emprise. They answered with acclamations that they were ready to die in defence of the Faith, and would either conquer, or leave their bones with those of their countrymen in the waters of the Tezcuco.

The army of the allies next passed in review before the general. It is variously estimated by writers from a hundred and ten to a hundred and fifty thousand soldiers! The palpable exaggeration, no less than the discrepancy, shows that little reliance can be placed on any estimate. It is certain, however, that it was a multitudinous array, consisting not only of the flower of the Tlascalan warriors, but of those of Cholula, Tepeaca, and the neighboring territories, which had submitted to the Castilian crown.[11]

They were armed, after the Indian fashion, with bows and arrows, the glassy *maquahuitl*, and the long pike, which formidable weapon Cortés, as we have seen, had introduced among his own troops. They

[10] Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 184.—"Porque demas del premio, que les davia en el cielo, se les seguirian en esto mundo grandíssima honra, riquezas inestimables." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chichimeca, MS., cap. 91.

[11] "Cosa muy de ver," says Father Sahagun, without hazarding any precise number, "en la cantidad y en los aparejos que llevaban." Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 12, cap. 30, MS.

were divided into battalions, each having its own banner, displaying the appropriate arms or emblem of its company. The four great chiefs of the nation marched in the van; three of them venerable for their years, and showing, in the insignia which decorated their persons, the evidence of many a glorious feat in arms. The panache of many-colored plumes floated from their casques, set in emeralds or other precious stones. Their *escaupil*, or stuffed doublet of cotton, was covered with the graceful surcoat of feather-work, and their feet were protected by sandals embossed with gold. Four young pages followed, bearing their weapons, and four others supported as many standards, on which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of the four great divisions of the republic.[12] The Tlascalans, though frugal in the extreme, and rude in their way of life, were as ambitious of display in their military attire as any of the races on the plateau. As they defiled before Cortés, they saluted him by waving their banners and by a flourish of their wild music, which the general acknowledged by courteously raising his cap as they passed.[13] The Tlascalan warriors, and especially the younger Xicotencatl, their commander, affected to imitate their European masters, not merely in their tactics, but in minuter matters of military etiquette.

Cortés, with the aid of Marina, made a brief address to his Indian allies. He reminded them that he was going to fight their battles against their ancient enemies. He called on them to support him in a manner worthy of their renowned republic. To those who

[12] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 20.

[13] Ibid., ubi supra.

remained at home, he committed the charge of aiding in the completion of the brigantines, on which the success of the expedition so much depended; and he requested that none would follow his banner who were not prepared to remain till the final reduction of the capital.[14] This address was answered by shouts, or rather yells, of defiance, showing the exultation felt by his Indian confederates at the prospect of at last avenging their manifold wrongs and humbling their haughty enemy.

Before setting out on the expedition, Cortés published a code of ordinances, as he terms them, or regulations for the army, too remarkable to be passed over in silence. The preamble sets forth that in all institutions, whether divine or human,—if the latter have any worth,—order is the great law. The ancient chronicles inform us that the greatest captains in past times owed their successes quite as much to the wisdom of their ordinances as to their own valor and virtue. The situation of the Spaniards eminently demanded such a code; a mere handful of men as they were, in the midst of countless enemies, most cunning in the management of their weapons and in the art of war. The instrument then reminds the army that the conversion of the heathen is the work most acceptable in the eye of the Almighty, and one that will be sure to receive his support. It calls on every soldier to regard this as the prime object of the expedition, *without which the war would be manifestly unjust, and every acquisition made by it, a robbery.*[15]

[14] Herrera, Hist. general, loc. cit.

[15] "Que su principal motivo é intencion sea apartar y desarraigar

The general solemnly protests that the principal motive which operates in his own bosom is the desire to wean the natives from their gloomy idolatry and to impart to them the knowledge of a purer faith; and next, to recover for his master, the emperor, the dominions which of right belong to him.[16]

The ordinances then prohibit all blasphemy against God or the saints; a vice much more frequent among Catholic than Protestant nations, arising, perhaps, less from difference of religion than of physical temperament,—for the warm sun of the South, under which Catholicism prevails, stimulates the sensibilities to the more violent expression of passion.[17]

Another law is directed against gaming, to which the Spaniards, in all ages, have been peculiarly addicted.

de las dichas idolatrías á todos los naturales destas partes y reducillos ó á lo menos desear su salvacion y que sean reducidos al conocimiento de Dios y de su Santa Fe católica: porque si con otra intencion se hiciese la dicha guerra seria injusta y todo lo que en ella se oviese Onoloxio é obligado á restitucion." Ordenanzas militares, MS.

[16] " É desde ahora protesto en nombre de S. M. que mi principal intencion é motivo es facer esta guerra é las otras que ficiese por traer y reducir á los dichos naturales al dicho conocimiento de nuestra Santa Fe é creencia; y despues por los sozjugar é supeditar debajo del yugo é dominio imperial é real de su Sacra Magestad, á quien juridicamente el Señorío de todas estas partes." Ordenanzas militares, MS.

[17] " Ce n'est qu'en Espagne et en Italie," says the penetrating historian of the Italian Republics, " qu'on rencontre cette habitude vicieuse, absolument inconnue aux peuples protestants, et qu'il ne faut point confondre avec les grossiers juremens que le peuple en tout pays mêle à ses discours. Dans tous les accès de colère des peuples du Midi, ils s'attaquent aux objets de leur culte, ils les menacent, et ils accablent de paroles outrageantes la Divinité elle-même, le Rédempteur ou ses saints." Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes, cap. 126.

Cortés, making allowance for the strong national propensity, authorizes it under certain limitations, but prohibits the use of dice altogether.[18] Then follow other laws against brawls and private combats, against personal taunts and the irritating sarcasms of rival companies; rules for the more perfect discipline of the troops, whether in camp or the field. Among others is one prohibiting any captain, under pain of death, from charging the enemy without orders; a practice noticed as most pernicious and of too frequent occurrence,—showing the impetuous spirit and want of true military subordination in the bold cavaliers who followed the standard of Cortés.

The last ordinance prohibits any man, officer or private, from securing to his own use any of the booty taken from the enemy, whether it be gold, silver, precious stones, feather-work, stuffs, slaves, or other commodity, however or wherever obtained, in the city or in the field, and requires him to bring it forthwith to the presence of the general, or the officer appointed to receive it. The violation of this law was punished with death and confiscation of property. So severe

[18] Lucio Marineo, who witnessed all the dire effects of this national propensity at the Castilian court, where he was residing at this time, breaks out into the following animated apostrophe against it: "The gambler is he who wishes and conspires the death of his parents, he who swears falsely by God and by the life of his king and lord, he who kills his own soul and casts it into hell. What will not the gambler do, when he is not ashamed to lose his money, his time, his sleep, his reputation, his honor, and even life itself? So that, considering how great a number of men are incessantly engaged in play, the opinion seems to me well founded of those who say that *hell is filled with gamblers.*" Cosas memorables de Espagña (ed. Sevilla, 1539), fol. 165.

an edict may be thought to prove that, however much the *Conquistador* may have been influenced by spiritual considerations, he was by no means insensible to those of a temporal character.[19]

These provisions were not suffered to remain a dead letter. The Spanish commander, soon after their proclamation, made an example of two of his own slaves, whom he hanged for plundering the natives. A similar sentence was passed on a soldier for the like offence, though he allowed him to be cut down before the sentence was entirely executed. Cortés knew well the character of his followers; rough and turbulent spirits, who required to be ruled with an iron hand. Yet he was not eager to assert his authority on light occasions. The intimacy into which they were thrown by their peculiar situation, perils, and sufferings, in which all equally shared, and a common interest in the adventure, induced a familiarity between men and officers, most unfavorable to military discipline. The general's own manners, frank and liberal, seemed to invite this freedom, which, on ordinary occasions, he made no attempt to repress; perhaps finding it too difficult, or at least impolitic, since it afforded a safety-valve for the spirits of a licentious soldiery, that, if violently coerced, might have burst forth into open mutiny. But the limits of his forbearance were clearly defined; and any attempt to overstep them, or to vio-

[19] These regulations are reported with much uniformity by Herrera, Solís, Clavigero, and others, but with such palpable inaccuracy that it is clear they never could have seen the original instrument. The copy in my possession was taken from the Muñoz collection. As the document, though curious and highly interesting, has never been published, I have given it entire in the Appendix, Part 2, No. 13.

late the established regulations of the camp, brought a sure and speedy punishment on the offender. By thus tempering severity with indulgence, masking an iron will under the open bearing of a soldier, Cortés established a control over his band of bold and reckless adventurers, such as a pedantic martinet, scrupulous in enforcing the minutiæ of military etiquette, could never have obtained.

The ordinances, dated on the twenty-second of December, were proclaimed to the assembled army on the twenty-sixth. Two days afterwards, the troops were on their march, and Cortés, at the head of his battalions, with colors flying and music playing, issued forth from the gates of the republican capital, which had so generously received him in his distress, and which now, for the second time, supplied him with the means for consummating his great enterprise. The population of the city, men, women, and children, hung on the rear of the army, taking a last leave of their countrymen, and imploring the gods to crown their arms with victory.

Notwithstanding the great force mustered by the Indian confederates, the Spanish general allowed but a small part of them now to attend him. He proposed to establish his headquarters at some place on the Tezcucan lake, whence he could annoy the Aztec capital by reducing the surrounding country, cutting off the supplies, and thus placing the city in a state of blockade.[80]

[80] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 20.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 127. The former historian states the number of Indian allies who followed Cortés, at eighty thousand; the latter at ten thousand! *¿Quien sabe?*

The direct assault on Mexico itself he intended to postpone until the arrival of the brigantines should enable him to make it with the greatest advantage. Meanwhile, he had no desire to encumber himself with a superfluous multitude, whom it would be difficult to feed; and he preferred to leave them at Tlascala, whence they might convey the vessels, when completed, to the camp, and aid him in his future operations.

Three routes presented themselves to Cortés by which he might penetrate into the Valley. He chose the most difficult, traversing the bold sierra which divides the eastern plateau from the western, and so rough and precipitous as to be scarcely practicable for the march of an army. He wisely judged that he should be less likely to experience annoyance from the enemy in this direction, as they might naturally confide in the difficulties of the ground for their protection.

The first day, the troops advanced five or six leagues, Cortés riding in the van, at the head of his little body of cavalry. They halted at the village of Tetzmellocan, at the base of the mountain chain which traverses the country, touching, at its southern limit, the mighty Iztaccihuatl, or "White Woman,"—white with the snows of ages.[21] At this village they met with a

[21] This mountain, which, with its neighbor Popocatepetl, forms the great barrier—the *Herculis columnæ*—of the Mexican Valley, has been fancifully likened, from its long dorsal swell, to the back of a dromedary. (Tudor's Tour in North America, Let. 22.) It rises far above the limits of perpetual snow in the tropics, and its huge crest and sides, enveloped in its silver drapery, form one of the most striking objects in the magnificent *coup-d'œil* presented to the inhabitants of the capital.

friendly reception, and on the following morning began the ascent of the sierra.

The path was steep and exceedingly rough. Thick matted bushes covered its surface, and the winter torrents had broken it into deep stony channels, hardly practicable for the passage of artillery, while the straggling branches of the trees, flung horizontally across the road, made it equally difficult for cavalry The cold, as they rose higher, became intense. It was keenly felt by the Spaniards, accustomed of late to a warm, or at least temperate, climate; though the extreme toil with which they forced their way upward furnished the best means of resisting the weather. The only vegetation to be seen in these higher regions was the pine, dark forests of which clothed the sides of the mountains, till even these dwindled into a thin and stunted growth. It was night before the way-worn soldiers reached the bald crest of the sierra, where they lost no time in kindling their fires; and, huddling round their bivouacs, they warmed their frozen limbs and prepared their evening repast.

With the earliest dawn, the troops were again in motion. Mass was said, and they began their descent, more difficult and painful than their ascent on the day preceding; for, in addition to the natural obstacles of the road, they found it strewn with huge pieces of timber and trees, obviously felled for the purpose by the natives. Cortés ordered up a body of light troops to clear away the impediments, and the army again resumed its march, but with the apprehension that the enemy had prepared an ambuscade, to surprise them when they should be entangled in the pass. They

moved cautiously forward, straining their vision to pierce the thick gloom of the forests, where the wily foe might be lurking. But they saw no living thing, except only the wild inhabitants of the woods, and flocks of the *zopilote*, the voracious vulture of the country, which, in anticipation of a bloody banquet, hung, like a troop of evil spirits, on the march of the army.

As they descended, the Spaniards felt a sensible and most welcome change in the temperature. The character of the vegetation changed with it, and the funereal pine, their only companion of late, gave way to the sturdy oak, to the sycamore, and, lower down, to the graceful pepper-tree mingling its red berry with the dark foliage of the forest; while, in still lower depths, the gaudy-colored creepers might be seen flinging their gay blossoms over the branches and telling of a softer and more luxurious climate.

At length the army emerged on an open level, where the eye, unobstructed by intervening wood or hill-top, could range, far and wide, over the Valley of Mexico. There it lay bathed in the golden sunshine, stretched out, as it were, in slumber, in the arms of the giant hills which clustered, like a phalanx of guardian genii, around it. The magnificent vision, new to many of the spectators, filled them with rapture. Even the veterans of Cortés could not withhold their admiration, though this was soon followed by a bitter feeling, as they recalled the sufferings which had befallen them within these beautiful but treacherous precincts. It made us feel, says the lion-hearted Conqueror, in his Letters, that "we had no choice but victory or death; and, our minds once resolved, we moved forward with

as light a step as if we had been going on an errand of certain pleasure."[22]

As the Spaniards advanced, they beheld the neighboring hill-tops blazing with beacon-fires, showing that the country was already alarmed and mustering to oppose them. The general called on his men to be mindful of their high reputation; to move in order, closing up their ranks, and to obey implicitly the commands of their officers.[23] At every turn among the hills, they expected to meet the forces of the enemy drawn up to dispute their passage. And, as they were allowed to pass the defiles unmolested, and drew near to the open plains, they were prepared to see them occupied by a formidable host, who would compel them to fight over again the battle of Otumba. But, although clouds of dusky warriors were seen, from time to time, hovering on the highlands, as if watching their progress, they experienced no interruption till they reached a *barranca*, or deep ravine, through which flowed a little river, crossed by a bridge partly demolished. On the opposite side a considerable body of Indians was stationed, as if to dispute the passage; but, whether distrusting their own numbers, or intimidated by the steady advance of the Spaniards, they offered them no annoyance, and were quickly dis-

[22] "Y prometímos todos de nunca de ella salir, sin Victoria, ó dejar allí las vidas. Y con esta determinacion ibamos todos tan alegres, como si fueramos á cosa de mucho placer." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 188.

[23] "Y yo torné á rogar, y encomendar mucho á los Españoles, que hiciessen, como siempre habian hecho, y como se esperaba de sus Personas; y que nadie no se desmandasse, y que fuessen con mucho concierto, y órden por su Camino." Ibid., ubi supra.

persed by a few resolute charges of cavalry. The army then proceeded, without molestation, to a small town, called Coatepec, where they halted for the night. Before retiring to his own quarters, Cortés made the rounds of the camp, with a few trusty followers, to see that all was safe.[24] He seemed to have an eye that never slumbered, and a frame incapable of fatigue. It was the indomitable spirit within, which sustained him.[25]

Yet he may well have been kept awake through the watches of the night, by anxiety and doubt. He was now but three leagues from Tezcuco, the far-famed capital of the Acolhuans. He proposed to establish his headquarters, if possible, at this place. Its numerous dwellings would afford ample accommodations for his army. An easy communication with Tlascala, by a different route from that which he had traversed, would furnish him with the means of readily obtaining supplies from that friendly country, and for the safe transportation of the brigantines, when finished, to be launched on the waters of the Tezcuco. But he had good reason to distrust the reception he should meet with in the capital; for an important revolution had

[24] "É como la Gente de pie venia algo cansada, y se hacia tarde, dormímos en una Poblacion, que se dice Coatepeque. . . . É yo con diez de Caballo comenzé la Vela, y Ronda de la prima, y hice, que toda la Gente estubiesse muy apercibida." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 188, 189.

[25] For the preceding pages, giving the account of the march, besides the Letter of Cortés, so often quoted, see Gomara, Crónica, cap. 121, —Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 18,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 137,—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 20,—Ixtlilxochitl, Relacion de la Venida de los Españoles y Principio de la Ley Evangélica (México, 1829), p. 9.

taken place there since the expulsion of the Spaniards from Mexico, of which it will be necessary to give some account.

The reader will remember that the cacique of that place, named Cacama, was deposed by Cortés, during his first residence in the Aztec metropolis, in consequence of a projected revolt against the Spaniards, and that the crown had been placed on the head of a younger brother, Cuicuitzca. The deposed prince was among the prisoners carried away by Cortés, and perished with the others, in the terrible passage of the causeway, on the *noche triste.* His brother, afraid, probably, after the flight of the Spaniards, of continuing with his own vassals, whose sympathies were altogether with the Aztecs, accompanied his friends in their retreat, and was so fortunate as to reach Tlascala in safety.

Meanwhile, a second son of Nezahualpilli, named Coanaco, claimed the crown, on his elder brother's death, as his own rightful inheritance. As he heartily joined his countrymen and the Aztecs in their detestation of the white men, his claims were sanctioned by the Mexican emperor. Soon after his accession, the new lord of Tezcuco had an opportunity of showing his loyalty to his imperial patron in an effectual manner.

A body of forty-five Spaniards, ignorant of the disasters in Mexico, were transporting thither a large quantity of gold, at the very time their countrymen were on the retreat to Tlascala. As they passed through the Tezcucan territory, they were attacked by Coanaco's orders, most of them massacred on the spot, and the rest sent for sacrifice to Mexico. The arms and accoutrements of these unfortunate men were hung up

as trophies in the temples, and their skins, stripped from their dead bodies, were suspended over the bloody shrines, as the most acceptable offering to the offended deities.[26]

Some months after this event, the exiled prince, Cuicuitzca, wearied with his residence in Tlascala, and pining for his former royal state, made his way back secretly to Tezcuco, hoping, it would seem, to raise a party there in his favor. But, if such were his expectations, they were sadly disappointed; for no sooner had he set foot in the capital than he was betrayed to his brother, who, by the advice of Guatemozin, put him to death, as a traitor to his country.[27] Such was the posture of affairs in Tezcuco when Cortés, for the second time, approached its gates; and well might he doubt, not merely the nature of his reception there, but whether he would be permitted to enter it at all, without force of arms.

These apprehensions were dispelled the following morning, when, before the troops were well under arms, an embassy was announced from the lord of Tezcuco. It consisted of several nobles, some of whom were known to the companions of Cortés. They bore a golden flag in token of amity, and a present of no great value to Cortés. They brought also a message from the cacique, imploring the general

[26] See *ante*, p. 395.—The skins of those immolated on the sacrificial stone were a common offering in the Indian temples, and the mad priests celebrated many of their festivals by publicly dancing with their own persons enveloped in these disgusting spoils of their victims. See Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, passim.

[27] Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 187.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 19.

to spare his territories, inviting him to take up his quarters in his capital, and promising on his arrival to become the vassal of the Spanish sovereign.

Cortés dissembled the satisfaction with which he listened to these overtures, and sternly demanded of the envoys an account of the Spaniards who had been massacred, insisting, at the same time, on the immediate restitution of the plunder. But the Indian nobles excused themselves by throwing the whole blame upon the Aztec emperor, by whose orders the deed had been perpetrated, and who now had possession of the treasure. They urged Cortés not to enter the city that day, but to pass the night in the suburbs, that their master might have time to prepare suitable accommodations for him. The Spanish commander, however, gave no heed to this suggestion, but pushed forward his march, and at noon, on the thirty-first of December, 1520, entered, at the head of his legions, the venerable walls of Tezcuco, "the place of rest," as not inaptly denominated.[28]

He was struck, as when he before visited this populous city, with the solitude and silence which reigned throughout its streets. He was conducted to the palace of Nezahualpilli, which was assigned as his quarters. It was an irregular pile of low buildings, covering a wide extent of ground, like the royal residence occupied by the troops in Mexico. It was spacious enough to furnish accommodations not only for all the Span-

[28] Tezcuco, a Chichimec name, according to Ixtlilxochitl, signifying "place of detention or rest," because the various tribes from the North halted there on their entrance into Anahuac. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10.

iards, says Cortés, but for twice their number.[29] He gave orders, on his arrival, that all regard should be paid to the persons and property of the citizens, and forbade any Spaniard to leave his quarters, under pain of death.

His commands were not effectual to suppress some excesses of his Indian allies, if the report of the Tezcucan chronicler be correct, who states that the Tlascalans burned down one of the royal palaces soon after their arrival. It was the depository of the national archives; and the conflagration, however it may have occurred, may well be deplored by the antiquary, who might have found in its hieroglyphic records some clue to the migrations of the mysterious races which first settled on the highlands of Anahuac.[30]

Alarmed at the apparent desertion of the place, as well as by the fact that none of its principal inhabitants came to welcome him, Cortés ordered some soldiers to ascend the neighboring *teocalli* and survey the city. They soon returned with the report that the inhabitants were leaving it in great numbers, with their families and effects, some in canoes upon the lake, others on foot towards the mountains. The general now comprehended the import of the cacique's sug-

[29] "La qual es tan grande, que aunque fueramos doblados los Españoles, nos pudieramos aposentar bien á placer en ella." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 191.

[30] "De tal manera que se quemáron todos los Archivos Reales de toda la Nueva España, que fué una de las mayores pérdidas que tuvo esta tierra, porque con esto toda la memoria de sus antiguayas y otras cosas que eran como Escrituras y recuerdos perecièron desde este tiempo. La obra de las Casas era la mejor y la mas artificiosa que hubo en esta tierra." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 91.

gestion that the Spaniards should pass the night in the suburbs,—in order to secure time for evacuating the city. He feared that the chief himself might have fled. He lost no time in detaching troops to secure the principal avenues, where they were to turn back the fugitives, and arrest the cacique, if he were among the number. But it was too late. Coanaco was already far on his way across the lake to Mexico.

Cortés now determined to turn this event to his own account, by placing another ruler on the throne, who should be more subservient to his interests. He called a meeting of the few principal persons still remaining in the city, and, by their advice and ostensible election, advanced a brother of the late sovereign to the dignity, which they declared vacant. This prince, who consented to be baptized, was a willing instrument in the hands of the Spaniards. He survived but a few months,[31] and was succeeded by another member of the royal house, named Ixtlilxochitl, who, indeed, as general of his armies, may be said to have held the reins of government in his hands during his brother's lifetime. As this person was intimately associated

[31] The historian Ixtlilxochitl pays the following high tribute to the character of his royal kinsman, whose name was Tecocol. Strange that this name is not to be found—with the exception of Sahagun's work—in any contemporary record! "Fué el primero que lo fué en Tezcoco, con harta pena de los Españoles, porque fué nobilísimo y los quiso mucho. Fué D. Fernando Tecocoltzin muy gentil hombre, alto de cuerpo y muy blanco, tanto cuanto podia ser cualquier Español por muy blanco que fuese, y que mostraba su persona y término descender, y ser del linage que era. Supo la lengua Castellana, y así casi las mas noches despues de haber cenado, trataban él y Cortés de todo lo que se debia hacer acerca de las guerras." Ixtlilxochitl, Venida de los Españoles, pp. 12, 13.

with the Spaniards in their subsequent operations, to the success of which he essentially contributed, it is proper to give some account of his early history, which, in truth, is as much enveloped in the marvellous as that of any fabulous hero of antiquity.[32]

He was son, by a second queen, of the great Nezahualpilli. Some alarming prodigies at his birth, and the gloomy aspect of the planets, led the astrologers who cast his horoscope to advise the king, his father, to take away the infant's life, since, if he lived to grow up, he was destined to unite with the enemies of his country and overturn its institutions and religion. But the old monarch replied, says the chronicler, that "the time had arrived when the sons of Quetzalcoatl were to come from the East to take possession of the land; and, if the Almighty had selected his child to co operate with them in the work, His will be done."[33]

[32] The accession of Tecocol, as, indeed, his existence, passes unnoticed by some historians, and by others is mentioned in so equivocal a manner—his Indian name being omitted—that it is very doubtful if any other is intended than his younger brother Ixtlilxochitl. The Tezcucan chronicler bearing this last melodious name* has alone given the particulars of his history. I have followed him, as, from his personal connections, having had access to the best sources of information; though, it must be confessed, he is far too ready to take things on trust, to be always the best authority.

[33] "Él respondió, que era por demas ir contra lo determinado por el Dios Criador de todas las cosas, pues no sin misterio y secreto juicio suyo le daba tal Hijo al tiempo y quando se acercaban las profecías

* [This name —"which," says Mr. Tylor, "sticks in the throats of readers of Prescott"—signifies "vanilla-face," being compounded of *ixtli*, face, and *tlilxochitl*, vanilla, the latter being itself a compound of *tlilli*, black, and *xochitl*, flower.—Buschmann, Über die Aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 681.—ED.]

As the boy advanced in years, he exhibited a marvellous precocity not merely of talent, but of mischievous activity, which afforded an alarming prognostic for the future. When about twelve years old, he formed a little corps of followers of about his own age, or somewhat older, with whom he practised the military exercises of his nation, conducting mimic fights and occasionally assaulting the peaceful burghers and throwing the whole city as well as palace into uproar and confusion. Some of his father's ancient counsellors, connecting this conduct with the predictions at his birth, saw in it such alarming symptoms that they repeated the advice of the astrologers to take away the prince's life, if the monarch would not see his kingdom one day given up to anarchy. This unpleasant advice was reported to the juvenile offender, who was so much exasperated by it that he put himself at the head of a party of his young desperadoes, and, entering the houses of the offending counsellors, dragged them forth and administered to them the *garrote*,—the mode in which capital punishment was inflicted in Tezcuco.

He was seized and brought before his father. When questioned as to his extraordinary conduct, he coolly replied "that he had done no more than he had a right to do. The guilty ministers had deserved their fate, by endeavoring to alienate his father's affections from him, for no other reason than his too great fondness for the profession of arms,—the most honorable profession in the state, and the one most worthy of a

de sus Antepasados, que haviase venir nuevas Gentes á poseer la Tierra, como eran los Hijos de Quetzalcoatl que aguardaban su venida de la parte oriental." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 69.

prince. If they had suffered death, it was no more than they had intended for him." The wise Nezahualpilli, says the chronicler, found much force in these reasons; and, as he saw nothing low and sordid in the action, but rather the ebullition of a daring spirit, which in after-life might lead to great things, he contented himself with bestowing a grave admonition on the juvenile culprit.[34] Whether this admonition had any salutary effect on his subsequent demeanor, we are not informed. It is said, however, that as he grew older he took an active part in the wars of his country, and, when no more than seventeen, had won for himself the insignia of a valiant and victorious captain.[35]

On his father's death, he disputed the succession with his elder brother, Cacama. The country was menaced with a civil war, when the affair was compromised by his brother's ceding to him that portion of his territories which lay among the mountains. On the arrival of the Spaniards, the young chieftain—for he was scarcely twenty years of age—made, as we have seen, many friendly demonstrations towards them, induced,

[34] "Con que el Rey no supo con que ocacion poderle castigar, porque lo parecieron sus razones tan vivas y fundadas que su parte no habia hecho cosa indebida ni vileza para poder ser castigado, mas tan solo una ferocidad de ánimo; pronóstico de lo mucho que habia de venir á saber por las Armas, y así el Rey dijo, que se fuese á la mano." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 69.

[35] Ibid., ubi supra.—Among other anecdotes recorded of the young prince's early development is one of his having, when only three years old, pitched his nurse into a well, as she was drawing water, to punish her for certain improprieties of conduct of which he had been witness. But I spare the reader the recital of these astonishing proofs of precocity, as it is very probable his appetite for the marvellous may not keep pace with that of the chronicler of Tezcuco.

no doubt, by his hatred of Montezuma, who had supported the pretensions of Cacama.[36] It was not, however, till his advancement to the lordship of Tezcuco that he showed the full extent of his good will. From that hour he became the fast friend of the Christians, supporting them with his personal authority and the whole strength of his military array and resources, which, although much shorn of their ancient splendor since the days of his father, were still considerable, and made him a most valuable ally. His important services have been gratefully commemorated by the Castilian historians; and history should certainly not defraud him of his just meed of glory,—the melancholy glory of having contributed more than any other chieftain of Anahuac to rivet the chains of the white man round the necks of his countrymen.

[36] *Ante*, vol. I. p. 306.

The two pillars on which the story of the Conquest mainly rests are the Chronicles of Gomara and of Bernal Diaz, two individuals having as little resemblance to each other as the courtly and cultivated churchman has to the unlettered soldier.

The first of these, Francisco Lopez de Gomara, was a native of Seville. On the return of Cortés to Spain after the Conquest, Gomara became his chaplain, and on his patron's death continued in the service of his son, the second Marquis of the Valley. It was then that he wrote his Chronicle; and the circumstances under which it was produced might lead one to conjecture that the narrative would not be conducted on the strict principles of historic impartiality. Nor would such a conjecture be without foundation. The history of the Conquest is necessarily that of the great man who achieved it. But Gomara has thrown his hero's character into so bold relief that it has entirely overshadowed that of his brave companions in arms; and, while he has tenderly drawn the veil over the infirmities of his favorite, he is ever studious to display his exploits in the full blaze of panegyric.

His situation may in some degree excuse his partiality. But it did not vindicate him in the eyes of the honest Las Casas, who seldom concludes a chapter of his own narrative of the Conquest without administering a wholesome castigation to Gomara. He even goes so far as to tax the chaplain with "downright falsehood," assuring us "that he had neither eyes nor ears but for what his patron chose to dictate to him." That this is not literally true is evident from the fact that the narrative was not written till several years after the death of Cortés. Indeed, Gomara derived his information from the highest sources; not merely from his patron's family, but also from the most distinguished actors in the great drama, with whom his position in society placed him in intimate communication.

The materials thus obtained he arranged with a symmetry little understood by the chroniclers of the time. Instead of their rambling incoherencies, his style displays an elegant brevity; it is as clear as it is concise. If the facts are somewhat too thickly crowded on the reader, and occupy the mind too busily for reflection, they at least all tend to a determinate point, and the story, instead of dragging its slow length along till our patience and interest are exhausted, steadily maintains its onward march. In short, the execution of the work is not only superior to that of most contemporary narratives, but, to a certain extent, may aspire to the rank of a classical composition.

Owing to these circumstances, Gomara's History soon obtained general circulation and celebrity; and, while many a letter of Cortés, and the more elaborate compositions of Oviedo and Las Casas, were suffered to slumber in manuscript, Gomara's writings were printed and reprinted in his own day, and translated into various languages of Europe. The first edition of the *Crónica de la Nueva-España* appeared at Medina, in 1553; it was republished at Antwerp the following year. It has since been incorporated in Barcia's collection, and lastly, in 1826, made its appearance on this side of the water from the Mexican press. The circumstances attending this last edition are curious. The Mexican government appropriated a small sum to defray the expense of translating what was supposed to be an original chronicle of Chimalpain, an Indian writer who lived at the close of the sixteenth century. The care of the translation was committed to the laborious Bustamante. But this scholar had not proceeded far in his labor when he ascertained that the supposed original was itself an Aztec translation of Gomara's Chronicle. He persevered, however, in his editorial labors, until he had given to the public an American editior

of Gomara. It is a fact more remarkable that the editor in his different compilations constantly refers to this same work as the Chronicle of Chimalpain.

The other authority to which I have adverted is Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a native of Medina del Campo in Old Castile. He was born of a poor and humble family, and in 1514 came over to seek his fortunes in the New World. He embarked as a common soldier under Cordova in the first expedition to Yucatan. He accompanied Grijalva in the following year to the same quarter, and finally enlisted under the banner of Cortés. He followed this victorious chief in his first march up the great plateau; descended with him to make the assault on Narvaez; shared the disasters of the *noche triste;* and was present at the siege and surrender of the capital. In short, there was scarcely an event or an action of importance in the whole war in which he did not bear a part. He was engaged in a hundred and nineteen different battles and rencontres, in several of which he was wounded, and in more than one narrowly escaped falling into the enemy's hands. In all these Bernal Diaz displayed the old Castilian valor, and a loyalty which made him proof against the mutinous spirit that too often disturbed the harmony of the camp. On every occasion he was found true to his commander and to the cause in which he was embarked. And his fidelity is attested not only by his own report, but by the emphatic commendations of his general; who selected him on this account for offices of trust and responsibility, which furnished the future chronicler with access to the best means of information in respect to the Conquest.

On the settlement of the country, Bernal Diaz received his share of the *repartimientos* of land and laborers. But the arrangement was not to his satisfaction; and he loudly murmurs at the selfishness of his commander, too much engrossed by the care for his own emoluments to think of his followers. The division of spoil is usually an unthankful office. Diaz had been too long used to a life of adventure to be content with one of torpid security. He took part in several expeditions conducted by the captains of Cortés, and he accompanied that chief in his terrible passage through the forests of Honduras. At length, in 1568, we find the veteran established as regidor of the city of Guatemala, peacefully employed in recounting the valorous achievements of his youth. It was then nearly half a century after the Conquest. He had survived his general and nearly all his ancient companions in arms. Five only remained of that gallant band who

had accompanied Cortés on his expedition from Cuba; and those five to borrow the words of the old chronicler, were "poor, aged, and infirm, with children and grandchildren looking to them for support, but with scarcely the means of affording it,—ending their days, as they had begun them, in toil and trouble." Such was the fate of the Conquerors of golden Mexico.

The motives which induced Bernal Diaz to take up his pen at so late a period of life were to vindicate for himself and his comrades that share of renown in the Conquest which fairly belonged to them. Of this they had been deprived, as he conceived, by the exaggerated reputation of their general; owing, no doubt, in part, to the influence of Gomara's writings. It was not, however, till he had advanced beyond the threshold of his own work that Diaz met with that of the chaplain. The contrast presented by his own homely diction to the clear and polished style of his predecessor filled him with so much disgust that he threw down his pen in despair. But, when he had read further, and saw the gross inaccuracies and what he deemed disregard of truth in his rival, he resumed his labors, determined to exhibit to the world a narrative which should at least have the merit of fidelity. Such was the origin of the *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva-España.*

The chronicler may be allowed to have succeeded in his object. In reading his pages, we feel that, whatever are the errors into which he has fallen, from oblivion of ancient transactions, or from unconscious vanity,—of which he had full measure,—or from credulity, or any other cause, there is nowhere a wilful perversion of truth. Had he attempted it, indeed, his very simplicity would have betrayed him. Even in relation to Cortés, while he endeavors to adjust the true balance between his pretensions and those of his followers, and while he freely exposes his cunning or cupidity, and sometimes his cruelty, he does ample justice to his great and heroic qualities. With all his defects, it is clear that he considers his own chief as superior to any other of ancient or modern times. In the heat of remonstrance, he is ever ready to testify his loyalty and personal attachment. When calumnies assail his commander, or he experiences unmerited slight or indignity, the loyal chronicler is prompt to step forward and shield him. In short, it is evident that, however much he may at times censure Cortés, he will allow no one else to do it.

Bernal Diaz, the untutored child of nature, is a most true and literal copyist of nature. He transfers the scenes of real life by a sort of

daguerreotype process, if I may so say, to his pages. He is among chroniclers what De Foe is among novelists. He introduces us into the heart of the camp, we huddle round the bivouac with the soldiers, loiter with them on their wearisome marches, listen to their stories, their murmurs of discontent, their plans of conquest, their hopes, their triumphs, their disappointments. All the picturesque scenes and romantic incidents of the campaign are reflected in his page as in a mirror. The lapse of fifty years has had no power over the spirit of the veteran. The fire of youth glows in every line of his rude history; and, as he calls up the scenes of the past, the remembrance of the brave companions who are gone gives, it may be, a warmer coloring to the picture than if it had been made at an earlier period. Time, and reflection, and the apprehensions for the future, which might steal over the evening of life, have no power over the settled opinions of his earlier days. He has no misgivings as to the right of conquest, or as to the justice of the severities inflicted on the natives. He is still the soldier of the Cross; and those who fell by his side in the fight were martyrs for the faith. "Where are now my companions?" he asks; "they have fallen in battle or been devoured by the cannibal, or been thrown to fatten the wild beasts in their cages! they whose remains should rather have been gathered under monuments emblazoned with their achievements, which deserve to be commemorated in letters of gold; for they died in the service of God and of his Majesty, and to give light to those who sat in darkness,—*and also to acquire that wealth which most men covet.*" The last motive—thus tardily and incidentally expressed—may be thought by some to furnish a better key than either of the preceding to the conduct of the Conquerors. It is, at all events, a specimen of that *naïveté* which gives an irresistible charm to the old chronicler, and which, in spite of himself, unlocks his bosom, as it were, and lays it open to the eye of the reader.

It may seem extraordinary that, after so long an interval, the incidents of his campaigns should have been so freshly remembered. But we must consider that they were of the most strange and romantic character, well fitted to make an impression on a young and susceptible imagination. They had probably been rehearsed by the veteran again and again to his family and friends, until every passage of the war was as familiar to his mind as the "tale of Troy" to the Greek rhapsodist, or the interminable adventures of Sir Lancelot or Sir Gawain to the Norman minstrel. The throwing of his narrative into the form of chronicle was but repeating it once more.

The literary merits of the work are of a very humble order; as might be expected from the condition of the writer. He has not even the art to conceal his own vulgar vanity, which breaks out with a truly comic ostentation in every page of the narrative. And yet we should have charity for this, when we find that it is attended with no disposition to depreciate the merits of others, and that its display may be referred in part to the singular simplicity of the man. He honestly confesses his infirmity, though, indeed, to excuse it. "When my chronicle was finished," he says, "I submitted it to two licentiates, who were desirous of reading the story, and for whom I felt all the respect which an ignorant man naturally feels for a scholar. I besought them, at the same time, to make no change or correction in the manuscript, as all there was set down in good faith. When they had read the work, they much commended me for my wonderful memory. The language, they said, was good old Castilian, without any of the flourishes and finicalities so much affected by our fine writers. But they remarked that it would have been as well if I had not praised myself and my comrades so liberally, but had left that to others. To this I answered that it was common for neighbors and kindred to speak kindly of one another; and, if we did not speak well of ourselves, who would? Who else witnessed our exploits and our battles, —unless, indeed, the clouds in the sky, and the birds that were flying over our heads?"

Notwithstanding the liberal encomiums passed by the licentiates on our author's style, it is of a very homely texture, abounding in colloquial barbarisms, and seasoned occasionally by the piquant sallies of the camp. It has the merit, however, of clearly conveying the writer's thoughts, and is well suited to their simple character. His narrative is put together with even less skill than is usual among his craft, and abounds in digressions and repetitions, such as vulgar gossips are apt to use in telling their stories. But it is superfluous to criticise a work by the rules of art which was written manifestly in total ignorance of those rules, and which, however we may criticise it, will be read and re-read by the scholar and the schoolboy, while the compositions of more classic chroniclers sleep undisturbed on their shelves.

In what, then, lies the charm of the work? In that spirit of truth which pervades it; which shows us situations as they were, and sentiments as they really existed in the heart of the writer. It is this which imparts a living interest to his story, and which is more frequently found in the productions of the untutored penman solely

intent upon facts, than in those of the ripe and fastidious scholar occupied with the mode of expressing them.

It was by a mere chance that this inimitable chronicle was rescued from the oblivion into which so many works of higher pretensions have fallen in the Peninsula. For more than sixty years after its composition the manuscript lay concealed in the obscurity of a private library, when it was put into the hands of Father Alonso Remon, Chronicler-General of the Order of Mercy. He had the sagacity to discover, under its rude exterior, its high value in illustrating the history of the Conquest. He obtained a license for the publication of the work, and under his auspices it appeared at Madrid in 1632,—the edition used in the preparation of these volumes.

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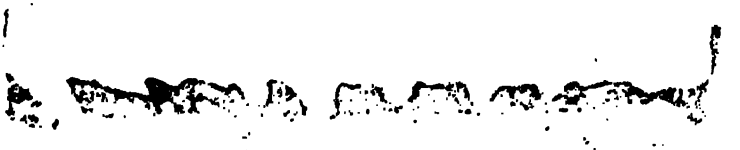

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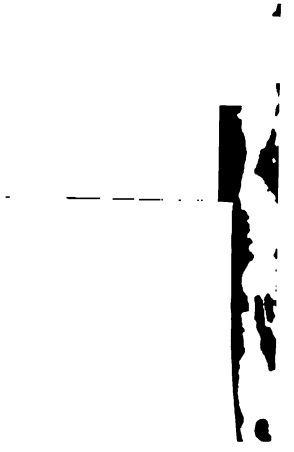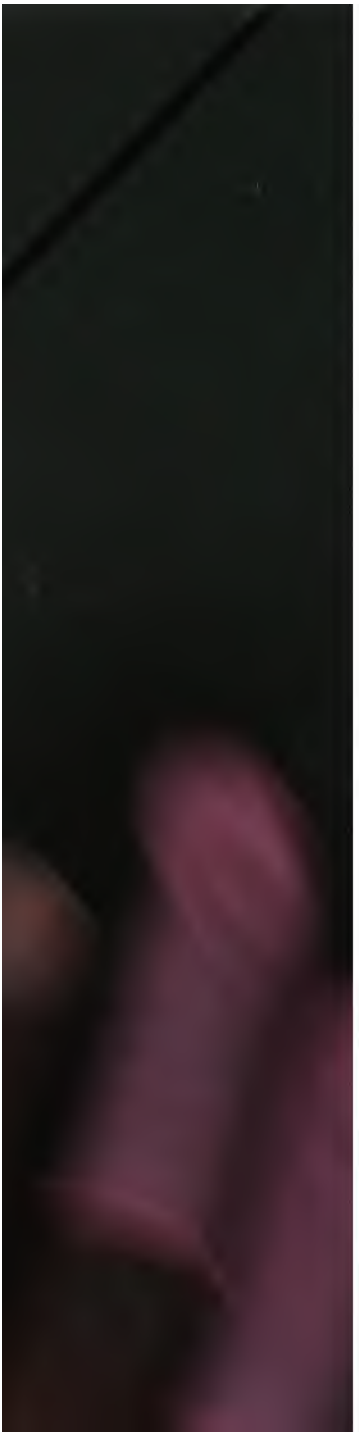
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